

CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
SCIENCE COUNCIL AND CGIAR SECRETARIAT

**REPORT OF THE
FOURTH EXTERNAL PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL FOOD POLICY RESEARCH CENTER
(IFPRI)**

SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
February 2005



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

*Office of the Dean and Director
Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station
Maryland Cooperative Extension*

1296A Symons Hall
College Park, Maryland 20742-5565
301.405.2072 TEL
301.314.9146 FAX

February 23, 2005

Dr. Ken Fischer
Chair, SC Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation
School of Land and Food Sciences
The University of Queensland
Brisbane Q 4072
Australia

Dr. Francisco Reifschneider
Director
Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
The World Bank
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433, USA

Dear Drs. Fischer and Reifschneider:

On behalf of the Panel, I am pleased to submit to you the Report of the Fourth External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The Panel has reviewed, as requested, IFPRI's performance in the four broad areas of: i) mission, strategy and priorities; ii) quality and relevance of the science; iii) effectiveness and efficiency of management (including governance); and iv) accomplishments and impact, as well as the specific list of questions posed by the Science Council.

As you will read, the Panel's assessment of IFPRI's overall performance is highly positive. IFPRI continues to be strong in its traditional areas of accomplishment and has made impressive efforts to move in the directions recommended in the third EPMR. The Panel has a number of recommendations for IFPRI, but these are aimed at positioning IFPRI as well as possible for future challenges, not at correcting critical problems that now exist.

This review was a challenging assignment for the Panel, but also a stimulating and rewarding one. Despite a wide background in experience and perspectives, the Panel had no significant disagreements that were expressed in our discussions, and the recommendations and assessments are truly unified views of the entire Panel.

The one regret that the Panel felt strongly was that we had to spend too much time absorbing and comprehending the huge quantity of research and related effort in the great number of projects IFPRI has undertaken during the review period. Although the Center-Commissioned External Review of 2004 was of substantial help, it would have been far better to have had detailed

Drs. Fischer and Reifschneider

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reviews of each of IFPRI's research divisions that the Panel could have drawn upon. What we missed in having to go a long way toward such reviews ourselves was the time to fully assess IFPRI's achievements and prospects in the larger context of research in other institutions and IFPRI's comparative advantage, both currently and in the likely future evolution of demand for social science research in the CGIAR. We were able to do this for some areas of IFPRI's work, but not for other important areas or for IFPRI as a whole in the depth we would like to have done. This perception underlies the Panel's recommendation for rolling annual reviews of IFPRI's Divisions that would result in each Division undergoing an external review every five years.

IFPRI staff provided exemplary cooperation in responding to a large number of informational requests, and from the DG on through the entire organization, both in Washington D.C. and in the Panel's field visits, IFPRI gave the Panel a feeling of being not just tolerated but welcome. The friendliness of everyone with whom we interacted at IFPRI made the work much more pleasant than it might have been.

Personally, I have to thank the SC for entrusting me with the task of chairing this Panel in view of my slight experience with IFPRI or the CGIAR generally. That placed an especially significant burden on the SC Secretariat's representative on the Panel, Tim Kelley, whose many and continuous contributions were invaluable. I join the Panel in also thanking Selçuk Ozgediz and Manny Lantin for their advice and assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bruce L. Gardner".

Bruce Gardner, Chair
External Review Panel

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**REPORT OF THE
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(IFPRI)**

Review Panel: Bruce Gardner (Chair)
Louis Paul
Dunstan Spencer
Peter Svedberg
Alberto Valdès
Linxiu Zhang

Jan Masaoka (Consultant)

Timothy Kelley (SC Secretariat)
Manny Lantin (CGIAR Secretariat)
Selçuk Ozgediz (Resource Person)

SCIENCE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

February 2005

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FOREWORD

This is the Report of the Fourth External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) Panel appointed to evaluate programme and management aspects of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The membership of the Panel and their backgrounds are provided in Appendix I. The standard Terms of Reference for EPMRs are enumerated in Appendix II. An additional set of issues specific to the particular review were given to the Panel by the Science Council (SC) and are outlined in Chapter I. The itinerary of the Panel is also provided there.

The Panel made every attempt to conduct the review in an objective and transparent manner with a focus on the future as well as the past. With respect to the review process, the Panel relied on a vast amount of information in identifying key issues and concerns, assessing Centre performance and reaching its conclusions and making recommendations. These included:

- briefings given to the Panel Chair and members by the SC and its Secretariat;
- extensive documentation provided by IFPRI and the SC and the CGIAR Secretariats (Appendix III);
- briefings during the Initial Visit to IFPRI HQs from: (a) the Director General (DG) and his Senior Management Team (SMT), (b) all research and communications divisions, (c) finance and administration team and, (d) the Board of Trustees (BoT);
- Panel member visits to Kampala, Uganda (April 2004), to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (January 2005) and to Beijing, China (November 2004) to attend international conferences sponsored by IFPRI, review divisions' programmes of work at regional headquarters, and meet with clients and collaborators in the field;
- review of BoT agendas, minutes and other documentation, observations of the BoT in action (at February & October 2004 meetings) and interaction with BoT members individually;
- consultant's report on governance by Jan Masaoka;
- in-person or telephone interviews and email correspondence with a variety of IFPRI peers, clients and other stakeholders, including other CGIAR centre DGs and social science programme leaders (see Appendix IV for list);
- follow-up meetings and discussions with IFPRI SMT members and senior staff during and between the Initial and Main Phase visits;
- IFPRI staff survey conducted electronically by the Panel; and
- meetings with individual IFPRI staff members and various committees at their request.

The Panel did not delve into every aspect of the Centre's activities and into all possible issues, but chose to focus on what it believed were the most significant ones, given the time available. To the extent possible, the Panel relied on the centre commissioned external review that was completed in early 2004. Although the Panel found this useful, it needed to devote a considerable portion of its time in trying to understand and evaluate the relevance and quality of the various research, capacity strengthening and communications activities undertaken by IFPRI since the last review.

The Centre was kept informed of the Panel's activities and progress during the review. The Panel Chair and IFPRI DG were in regular contact. During the Main Phase, Panel members worked individually and collectively to produce drafts of specific sections of the report. As they were completed, drafts were shared with the Centre for comments and to check for factual accuracy prior to finalization. At the end of the Main Phase visit, the Panel Chair presented the main findings and recommendations of the Review to IFPRI management and staff. A Board of Trustees member was also present.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Review covers the four broad areas of CGIAR Centre EPMRs: i) mission, strategy and priorities; ii) quality and relevance of the science; iii) effectiveness and efficiency of management (including governance); and iv) accomplishments and impact.

Vision, Mission and Strategy

IFPRI's vision is stated as "*a world free of hunger and malnutrition.*" Its mission is to "*provide policy solutions that cut hunger and malnutrition*". IFPRI's strategy for achieving its mission is in part apparent from its organizational structure. Division of labour among types of activity is achieved through separate but related work in research, capacity strengthening, and communication. Division of labour among broad research areas is indicated in the names of the five Divisions. Beyond organizing activities along the lines of its Divisions, overall priorities are indicated through the criteria spelled out in IFPRI's recent Strategy document: potential activities get higher priority by conforming to the above mission and by addressing "major emerging issues in food security," focusing on international public goods, and helping "the greatest number of people in deepest need". Pursuit of the priorities is intended to be furthered through the identification of research "themes."

One element of IFPRI's mission statement creates an ambiguity that is important when it comes to priority setting; namely, the extent to which policy research that is aimed at reducing poverty has to be directly relevant to food security. The Panel endorses the principle of going beyond agriculture and food security narrowly defined; however, the Panel believes IFPRI should focus on areas it is best suited to address, and not extend itself too far.

The issues that the Panel believes call for IFPRI's attention involve not broad strategy, but rather matters of prioritization and of operational tactics for carrying out IFPRI's highly ambitious agenda with maximum effectiveness. IFPRI's 14 research themes are unhelpful as indicators of IFPRI's priorities. Virtually every topic that involves food or poverty could be made to fit under one or another of them. The themes essentially place all IFPRI research on the same level of priority and do not serve, or are not used, as a tool for choosing among alternative research projects. Priorities are set more definitively in the process of project selection, which is less transparent.

Development Strategy and Governance Division (DSGD)

The mandate of this new Division, created in 2003, is to help identify the essential pre-conditions for successful pro-poor growth, and to strengthen developing country capacity for formulating and implementing national strategies. In assessing the Division, the Panel examined two broad issues - the development of a specific niche for DSGD vis-à-vis other entities, and what can be realistically expected of DSGD given its size and the broad and very challenging objectives. DSGD's potential strength seems associated with three elements: experience with long-term cross-country research, a programme of

country-specific support activities, and a focus on capacity building at the country level. While recognizing the explicit commitment to keeping an economy-wide perspective in DSGD, the Panel is left uncertain regarding the intended balance between a sectoral versus an economy-wide focus, and between an agricultural versus a rural focus.

IFPRI's research on the theme of *pro-poor public investment, priorities, finance and governance* is an example of relevant, innovative and rigorous empirical research very much in line with what makes IFPRI unique. The Panel considered whether DSGD could play a catalytic role in promoting social project evaluation of individual government investment projects, which would complement its role in the field of allocation of public expenditures. The Panel endorses the combination of cross-country and country-specific studies in analyzing development strategies. Country programmes should be supported by good research from cross-country analysis, but the research itself draws on relevant individual country experience. The *Strategic Analysis for Knowledge Support-(SAKKS)* is a laudable activity for IFPRI but it should be well-grounded in IFPRI research; otherwise it may not be distinguishable from work of a high level consulting firm. The Panel recognizes considerable progress in the identification of priority areas under the (new) *Governance Task Force*. However, IFPRI should consider how corruption and insecurity would be brought explicitly into this activity. Corruption could influence the optimal choice of specific policy instruments.

The Panel concludes that it is premature to try to evaluate the impact of the DSGD at this stage, considering its recent creation and breadth of its task.

Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND)

The Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND) focuses on research that provides solutions to food insecurity and reduction of malnutrition in all forms at the household, community and country levels. As expressed by many IFPRI stakeholders and peers, FCND's work is well known and highly regarded among development economists. The Panel concurs with that view, and would like to commend IFPRI for the overall achievements of the Division.

The *Diet Quality* project, aimed at identifying the reasons for and consequences of malnutrition, and at finding effective intervention policies, is a timely and urgent undertaking given the diets and health problems in developing countries. The programme *Large-scale Interventions to Enhance Human Capital Formation* fits well into FCND's revealed competence. Although the longitudinal micro-level dataset being generated by IFPRI in four countries in its research on *Pathways out of Poverty* is valuable and arguably an international public good, the Panel has doubts about whether this project, focused on small specific communities, is likely to come to policy-relevant conclusions that have more than just local validity. Another project that raised some doubts was the *HIV/AIDS* project, given that IFPRI has little experience and track record in that area of research and for which its comparative advantage is not evident.

Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD)

The overall goal of this Division is to achieve agricultural growth and poverty reduction with environmental sustainability. EPTD's relatively long standing in the areas of property rights, sustainable development of less-favoured areas and water resource allocation research have provided the Division with opportunities to establish its leading position in both research communities and policy effects in developing countries. The Panel commends EPTD for its work in these areas.

Having the IMPACT model as a well-developed research and analytical tool has made it possible for EPTD to collaborate widely within and outside of IFPRI on various policy analysis and commodity and resource use projections. IMPACT model projections of global food, agriculture and environment have provided foundations for the Centre's 2020 Initiative which are widely recognized as effective means of increasing public awareness and enabling it to dialogue with both developed and developing countries at agricultural and food policy levels. However, the Panel cautions against depending too much on a single, complex model to address the variety of topics covered by this Division.

The work in the area of biodiversity and biotechnology policy has enabled the Centre to gain significant recognition in the research community. The programme for biosafety systems (inherited from former ISNAR) will further enhance the Centre's capacity for participating in high level policy discussion. The Panel considers the work in these areas to be highly relevant and of good quality.

Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division (MTID)

This Division, like DSGD, is new – it was formed by consolidating parts of two previous Divisions of IFPRI. In the Panel's view, this restructuring and the creation of MTID was a logical integration and should provide a stronger focus on the important links between international trade and domestic markets and institutions. The new Division focuses on the analysis of the structure and performance of domestic and international markets for agricultural products.

MTID and outside collaborators have made important contributions in the area of food regulation and safety which is of paramount importance for trade in high-value perishable products. In the Panel's view, research on agricultural trade negotiations in the WTO and their implications for developing countries should rank high in MTID's agenda. As part of MTID's work on *Globalization and Markets*, IFPRI should give serious attention to the issue of what specific contribution it will make in the area of global trade modelling, and the expertise, partnerships and resources required to make this contribution. As part of that process, IFPRI should undertake a systematic review of the various global models.

A dominant theme of the Division and one that is emerging as a critical issue in development is *the Future of Smallholder Farming*. The Panel concurs with the emphasis given to this topic in MTID and highlights the need for addressing the many

transitional challenges the smallholder will face with rapidly evolving agricultural production and food systems.

Of the new activities in this Division, the *Southeast Asia Initiative* (SAI) appears to be one of the strongest, in terms of clarity of objectives, maturity of the research programme, existing staff and collaborators, and research, networking and outreach activities. The Panel believes the SAI model is probably transferable to other regions and would suggest consideration be given to embarking on a similar initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa.

ISNAR Division

IFPRI has moved quickly and efficiently to address the tasks given to it by the CGIAR when the ISNAR mandate was transferred to it in early 2004. The Panel would like to strike a note of caution, however, regarding the dangers of mission creep, duplication of efforts between the Division and other IFPRI programmes, and what appears to be an excessively speculative research agenda. The Panel commends the Division for steps taken so far to revise the training modules and devolve training events to regional partners.

There are ongoing concerns about the comparative advantage of the CGIAR in setting up of the Global Agriculture and Food University (GOAFU). The Panel is concerned that IFPRI itself may not have a comparative advantage in managing the project.

Communications Division

Through its communications work, IFPRI seeks to increase the impact of its research by using appropriate means to engage key stakeholders in a continuous dialogue. The Division succeeded in publicizing the activities of the Centre in high profile electronic and print media. The Panel commends the IFPRI for its effective communications programme.

Director General's Office (DGO)

The 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment has been a high profile research and advocacy activity of IFPRI during the last decade, and must be credited as one of the major initiatives that have buttressed the case for agriculture-led economic development of poor countries, and contributed to putting agriculture back in the portfolio of donors and policy makers, especially in Africa.

IFPRI's work on the returns to policy research, and particularly the impact of its own products and services, has been innovative and has set the standard for applied research in this important area. In addition, IFPRI's reviews of rates of return to agricultural research in other CGIAR centres have had a significant impact. The findings foster confidence that new initiatives in agricultural research are likely to pay off.

The HarvestPlus Challenge Programme was launched in 2003 and builds on earlier exploratory activities conducted by IFPRI, CGIAR centres and other collaborators. Overall the Panel finds that IFPRI's leadership of the HarvestPlus CP has been commendable and that the programme has great potential.

The Panel finds the donor relations activity well managed. IFPRI has a clear fund-raising strategy that recognizes the important changes that have taken place in recent years, including the trend by many donors to shift to restricted funding. IFPRI has produced an impressive record in fund raising in the period under the review.

Governance and Management

The IFPRI Board demonstrates the qualifications, diversity and attention required for governance in a rapidly evolving organization. It has supported changes in the Institute, and shifted its own composition and agendas to support the "new IFPRI." The Panel suggests that the oversight provided by the Board should be complemented by proactive inquiry into various financial matters.

IFPRI's Senior Management Team (SMT), augmented by committees and task-forces, provides a practical balance between a top-down and a participative approach to managing an organization. However, Management has not solved the long-standing issue of time pressures faced by Staff who have to perform a number of activities, including fund raising. Communications between management and staff also needs improvement.

IFPRI has managed its income and expenditures prudently.

The Panel commends the Centre for its gender balance (58% of total staff are female; 33% of senior staff are female), and for initiatives taken in this area.

Future Challenges

Responding to demand: In general, IFPRI has moved with impressive agility for an organization of its size to align its work with changing demands. This adaptability and willingness to take on more tasks has its costs. It places strains upon IFPRI's ability to focus upon its stated priorities and to stay within its areas of comparative advantage. This strain appears so far not to have been a serious problem in that the new demands fit well within IFPRI's expertise.

The strong position of IFPRI in the market for food and agricultural policy research in the international development context is abetted by the decline or stagnation of competing organizations. IFPRI's longstanding comparative advantage as a food policy research institution not only is retained but is increasing. The challenge facing IFPRI is how to make its priority setting work best to keep the research agenda as productive as possible.

Quality of Research: The essential input for high quality research is highly qualified and motivated researchers. IFPRI draws post-doctoral researchers with excellent credentials.

IFPRI's more senior staff also have earned a reputation as dedicated and competent researchers.

IFPRI has undertaken a number of quality-enhancing activities that the Panel commends – the publications review process, its seminar series with notable outside speakers, the brown-bag lunches, and the tools and methods task force, among others. A potentially serious problem for IFPRI is constraints on its capabilities to supply the services its donors are willing to pay for. An emerging challenge relates to the risk of a decline in the quality of research processes as given resources are strained to generate additional output. Increasing time pressure was the most commonly expressed source of dissatisfaction in the Panel's staff survey. There is no more important immediate task for management than finding ways to remedy this problem.

In terms of research output, annual publication of refereed journal articles per senior staff researcher increased from 0.7 in 1993-98 to 1.4 in 1998-2004, an impressive rate of improvement. IFPRI authors during 1998-2004 published 131 articles in the top 100 journals (using a recent international ranking of journals), although IFPRI authors had only six articles in the top 20 journals. A study of citations of IFPRI authors indicates that IFPRI's work is cited as much or more than that of comparable research institutions – a good achievement. However, it is also evident that the quality of IFPRI's publications output is heterogeneous. The challenge facing IFPRI is how to maintain its high reputation among donors and peers for its best products, while reducing the heterogeneity of perceived quality.

Relevance and Impact: IFPRI has made and is making choices that focus its work on topics on which clients thirst for knowledge. In this most important sense, IFPRI scores high on relevance. The Panel's assessment is that IFPRI is having substantial influence, if not impact, and the influence is beneficial. Also, IFPRI's influence is seen to be increasing, at least in the post-1990 period as compared to earlier years, and to some extent in the last six years as IFPRI's engagement with developing countries has become better organized and sustained. The challenge facing IFPRI is that social science impact is notoriously difficult to measure, and there are no pathways to carrying out impact assessment that will be convincing to everyone. The Panel commends IFPRI for its serious and sustained efforts to move forward on the impact assessment agenda.

Collaborations, Capacity Strengthening, and Decentralization: The scope and quantity of IFPRI's involvement with other Centres and leadership of important multi-centre programmes is impressive. Other Centres have given an overwhelmingly positive assessment of their collaborations with IFPRI. A challenge faced by IFPRI is that collaboration and decentralization of research are hard to manage while simultaneously focusing on cutting edge research. IFPRI will have to continue to make some of its most difficult top-level decisions in the area of resource allocation between headquarters and regional centre research. The Panel commends the steps that have been taken and the care with which they have been managed so far.

Organization and Management: A major challenge for IFPRI is how to manage its growth. Backlogs in hiring have contributed substantially to the "time-famine"

phenomenon referred to earlier. More fundamental, because they will persist even when the growth spurt is accommodated, are personnel and programme management issues that define what kind of organization IFPRI is and will become. Similar organizational issues arise with respect to decentralization. Do the gains from spreading people out exceed the losses? One could argue that the real purpose of decentralization is to get as much as possible of IFPRI into a developing country without damaging the political equilibrium that put IFPRI in Washington in the first place.

The Panel's overall assessment of IFPRI's performance since the last Review is overwhelmingly positive. The Panel concludes that IFPRI, during a period of considerable change in the external environment and rapid growth in the Centre itself, has successfully managed to integrate its research, capacity strengthening and outreach activities whilst continuing to generate outputs and services of high relevance to developing countries. It has substantially increased its publications in refereed journals, shown exemplary leadership in the CGIAR's CP, Systemwide Programmes and other work with CGIAR centres, and IFPRI staff are highly regarded amongst peers and partners. These achievements point to highly effective management of both programmatic and administrative components of IFPRI, for which the management team is to be congratulated. In the Panel's view, IFPRI is well positioned to take up the challenges ahead.

Recommendations

Chapter 2. Vision, Mission and Strategy

1. The Panel recommends that IFPRI sharpen its system of priority setting so that it will be more transparent how it decides what projects are most appropriately included in IFPRI's research agenda, and which are best left undone or left to other research institutions.

Chapter 3. Research ... (DSGD)

2. The Panel recommends an external evaluation of the DSGD two years from now.

Chapter 3. Research ... (MTID)

3. The Panel recommends that MTID carry out a review of the work done in the field of global modelling and agricultural trade negotiations, with a view to determining how IFPRI can best make use of that work, and whether or not IFPRI should do its own modelling.

Chapter 3. Research ... (ISNAR)

4. The Panel recommends that a Centre Commissioned External Review of the ISNAR Division should be carried out within two years to review its strategy and progress in implementing it.

5. The Panel recommends that IFPRI carefully assess what value involvement in the Global Open Agriculture and Food University adds to its programmes.

Chapter 4. Governance and Management (Governance)

6. The Panel recommends that the Board takes action in the following areas:

- Include a discussion within the Board that probes its own effectiveness, particularly in research quality review, regional and overall strategy development;
- Use a planning process or other means to raise the Board's sight to a long-term vision, and to forestall complacency;
- Recruit at least one member with a strong financial background to lead more proactive financial oversight by the Board; and
- Strengthen the structured evaluation process for the evaluation of the DG by adding multi-source assessment (*360 degree*) and objectives that go beyond organizational performance.

Chapter 4. Governance and Management (Organization and Management)

7. The Panel recommends that:

- To establish with some certainty the time spent on indirect activities (committees, fund-raising, conferences and presentations) that take time away from direct research work, and thus to provide better data for estimating time required for new projects, a system of time recording be instituted parallel to the existing one, on a trial basis, to cover an identified set of indirect activities.
- To address the concern about the lack of two-way communication between the DG, Division Heads and staff, a management course on this and other managerial tasks be offered to Heads, after a multi-source (360 degree) survey.

Chapter 5: IFPRI-wide Issues and Challenges for the Future

8. The Panel recommends that IFPRI should add to its strategy an approach to optimizing the mix of disciplinary competencies and research approaches as well as research areas.

9. The Panel recommends instituting rolling Centre Commissioned External Reviews of each Division, with the objective of each Division undergoing review every 5 years.

10. The Panel recommends that IFPRI should seriously consider an expanded visiting scholar programme and other means to infuse IFPRI with cutting-edge ideas and proposals.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origin and Evolution

The roots of IFPRI reach back a decade before its official establishment in 1975, and appear to have been grounded mainly in three perceptions¹. First, it was recognized from early on that national agricultural and food policies were often obstacles, or at best not as supportive as they could be, to the adoption of innovations in agricultural technology. Secondly, it was believed that development specialists generally insufficiently appreciated and too often misunderstood the process of agricultural and rural development in the broader development picture. The third perception was that “with so much controversy over the world’s supply of food, and over who or what was to blame for food problems, it was critical to have a continuous and objective assessment of what supply and demand were likely to be, when trouble might strike, and which countries were most likely to be affected” (Farrar, Ch. 1, p. 3).

At the same time, there were concerns about an international food policy institute, most notably: (1) the need for an additional source of supply-demand and projection analysis given that FAO and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, among other entities, were already carrying out these tasks; (2) the difficulty of finding an appropriate location for such an institute; and (3) “the appropriateness of having an institute possibly influenced by the market interests of the U.S., Canada, and Australia studying the food trade policies of Europe” (Farrar, Ch. 1, p. 2). These concerns continued to be felt in the decade after IFPRI’s inauguration, and some residual counterparts of them are still expressed today, notably in the view of some peers and partners the Panel interviewed who see IFPRI as too Washington-centric or too much committed to activities in which IFPRI is not believed to have a comparative advantage.

In 1980, IFPRI joined the CGIAR and began formally to receive financial support as part of the CG System. With IFPRI as the lead Centre, policy research within the CGIAR has largely focused on identifying policies and strategies for developing countries that have a major impact on agriculture, food, health, the generation and spread of new technologies, and the management and conservation of natural resources, thus improving the well being of low-income people. While improving policies is an area of focus targeted by the CGIAR as a whole, within the System IFPRI is expected to take the lead in agricultural and food policy research. IFPRI’s share of the current total amount of CGIAR spending in policy research is about 25%. CIFOR, IWMI, and WorldFish also have a significant amount of policy research activity, while the other CG Centres engage in policy research to a lesser degree.

¹ The historical facts in this chapter are drawn principally from IFPRI’s *Strategy and Medium Term Plan* documents and from Curtis Farrar, *History of IFPRI* (as posted on the IFPRI website).

1.2 Key Issues for the Panel

This fourth EPMR of IFPRI covers the period from 1998 to 2004. The terms of reference for this Review are the standard ones used by the Science Council for EPMRs (see Annex II) and cover the four broad areas of Centre review: i) mission, strategy and priorities; ii) quality and relevance of the science; iii) effectiveness and efficiency of management (including governance); and iv) accomplishments and impact. A Centre-specific list of issues was provided to the Panel Chair and the IFPRI DG for the Panel's consideration prior to the start of the Review. The SC noted that IFPRI is a prominent institute with a Systemwide function regarding policy research, whereas more specialised social science research is done at each Centre. An important task for the Panel, therefore, was to look at how IFPRI is interacting with other Centres, the nature of the relationship and the division of labour. Additional issues raised by the SC included: IFPRI's Strategic Plan in relation to the CGIAR Vision and Strategy; the Centre leadership and involvement in the Challenge Programmes and implications for the core programme; the strategy for absorbing the ISNAR mandate and function; the new organisational structure; and IFPRI's increasingly decentralised operations.

The 3rd EPMR covered IFPRI's performance between 1992 and 1997. The detailed list of recommendations from the previous review and an updated status report on implementation of those recommendations by IFPRI are provided in Appendix V. The 3rd EPMR panel made four broad sets of recommendations to 'assist IFPRI's evolution'². These were related to:

- integrating research and outreach activities;
- programmatic issues (more emphasis on open economies and water resources);
- strengthening impact assessment; and,
- taking on a developing country perspective in IFPRI's work.

The current EPMR panel has reviewed these recommendations and IFPRI's response to them (Appendix V). It is quite clear that IFPRI's management has taken the recommendations seriously and has taken steps to implement them in the operation of the Communications Division, increased attention to water issues, accelerated efforts in impact assessment, and more direct and sustained involvement in developing countries. The Panel believes the international trade component of IFPRI's work needs further strengthening, however, as discussed in Chapter 3.

1.3 Conduct of the Review

In December 2003, the Panel Chair had a formal briefing by telephone with the Science Council's Chair of the Standing Panel on Monitoring and Evaluation, the acting Executive Secretary of the Science Council and the Panel Secretary for the IFPRI EPMR

² TAC had largely endorsed the Panel's positive assessment and recommendations and, in addition, made a number of suggestions regarding possible future directions for IFPRI's work, including: more attention to institutional economics; new approaches to rural development; research on intellectual property rights; and, research on low-income transitional economies.

in December 2003. The Chairman of the Science Council, because of his status as DG of IFPRI during part of the EPMR review period, removed himself from all matters concerning the conduct of the review.

The Panel Chair attended the IFPRI Board of Trustees Meeting in early March, 2004 to interact with Board members concerning review expectations, and to elicit views and perceptions from the Board about the major challenges and opportunities facing the centre. In early April, a Panel member attended the IFPRI-sponsored international conference on “Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa by 2020” in Kampala, Uganda.

The entire Panel and the consultant on governance issues visited IFPRI’s headquarters in Washington, D.C. from 1-7 October 2004 for the Initial Phase of the Review. The Panel received briefings from the Director General and the Senior Management Team (SMT), project leaders (including Finance and Administration) and from individual programme and administrative staff. These briefings served as a basis for the Panel to gain an understanding of IFPRI’s goals, priorities and strategies as well as to gauge IFPRI’s performance during the review period. In addition, it gave the Panel a sense of the Institute’s own views on future challenges and how it proposes to address these. Panel members also requested and participated in meetings with other key staff. The purpose of the Initial Visit was for the Panel to identify transcending programme and management issues that required further examination, formulate hypotheses and reach tentative conclusions, and plan a strategy for completing the Review.

Field trips to China and Africa were undertaken in November 2004 and January 2005, respectively. Two panel members attended the IFPRI-sponsored conference on globalization and small holders in Nanjing on November 7-8, and an IFPRI-sponsored workshop on HarvestPlus in Beijing, China in November, 2004 and followed up with a number of stakeholder interviews and a three-day field visit. The Chair and another Panel member visited IFPRI’s Addis Ababa office for three days just prior to the Main Phase of the Review, and there met with government, private sector, and donor clientele.

Between the Initial Visit and the Main Phase, IFPRI staff surveys and a host of individual interviews conducted by the Panel with CGIAR Centres (DGs and social science programme leaders), Donors, Peers, and Clients. The staff survey was conducted through anonymous submission of an electronic form, available to all Washington and outposted professional and support employees of IFPRI. The CGIAR Centre, donor, peer, and client surveys were informal, in some cases personal interview, in others written responses to questions sent via email. In all, information was received from 110 IFPRI staff, 8 CGIAR Centres, and about 70 representatives of donors, clients, and peers.

The entire Panel, less the Board governance consultant, visited IFPRI’s headquarters again during the Main Phase of the review, from 25 January to 4 February 2005. During that time panel member drafts were integrated into a complete Panel report. Final drafts of the Report were shared with the DG and relevant senior staff for

factual correction. On 4 February the Panel's report was presented to IFPRI staff and management.

1.4 Remainder of the Report

The next chapter goes into detail about IFPRI's processes for strategy development and implementation. Chapter 3 then reviews and assesses IFPRI's programmes by Division. Chapter 4 covers Board governance and IFPRI's management processes and effectiveness. Chapter 5 assesses several cross-cutting issues and highlights the main challenges for the future.

CHAPTER 2 - VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGY

The Panel's review and assessment of IFPRI's programme of research, capacity strengthening and outreach will be developed in later chapters. Here the Panel provides a discussion of IFPRI's mission and strategy considering the general congruence of IFPRI's activities during 1998-2004 with the mission and strategy documents, in the context of the evolving demands for its services and its role in the CGIAR. Special attention is given to the priority setting process by which strategy is translated into programmatic choices.

2.1 Vision and Mission

Initially IFPRI's purpose was to "identify and analyse alternative national and international strategies for meeting the need for food in the world..." (First IFPRI EPMR Report, 1984). With subsequent revisions of its mission and strategy, this broad remit became more sharply defined and the focus on poverty reduction and sustainability more explicit — consistent with the changing focus of the CGIAR more generally. The current Centre strategy adopted in 2003 reflects this well. IFPRI's vision is stated as "a world free of hunger and malnutrition". Its mission in pursuit of that end is to "*provide policy solutions that cut hunger and malnutrition [by]: (1) identifying and analysing alternative international, national and local policies for improved food security and nutrition, with an emphasis on low-income countries and poor people and on the sound management of the natural resources base that supports agriculture; (2) contributing to capacity strengthening of people and institutions in developing countries conducting research on food policies; and, (3) actively engaging in policy communication, making research results available to all those in a position to apply or use them, and carrying out dialogues with those users to link research and policy action.*"

The CGIAR context is important because: (1) the CGIAR's founding focus on agricultural research means IFPRI has to attend to the linkages between such research and the CGIAR's mission; and (2) the central role of agricultural scientists throughout the CG system means IFPRI has to pay special attention to the organization of agricultural science, including interaction with national agricultural research institutions and issues of private/public sector research such as intellectual property rights, and research policy issues such as regulation of biotechnology and trade. In fact, the mission of IFPRI continues to fit centrally into the CGIAR goal, as expressed in its mission "to achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries."

One element of IFPRI's mission statement creates an ambiguity that is important when it comes to priority setting; namely, the extent to which policy research that is aimed at reducing poverty, to gain high priority at IFPRI, has to be directly relevant to food security. For example, policies that remove barriers to labour mobility out of agriculture may be excellent prospects for poverty reduction but not necessarily relevant to food security and so not pertinent to IFPRI's mission. However, there is ambiguity

about this conclusion, depending on how one defines food security. On the one hand, under a broad definition in which anything that increases capabilities to get food counts as an improvement in food security, mobility policies, or any policy raising the incomes of the poor, qualifies as food security policy (so IFPRI might just as well have reducing poverty as its sole objective). On the other hand, if food security is understood in a narrower sense, then it might place mobility research outside the mission. The Panel endorses the principle of going beyond agriculture and food security narrowly defined. The preferred definition of IFPRI (physical and economic access by all, at all times, to sufficient, nutritionally adequate food) is a broad-based one which fits any policy that increases incomes of the poor into the mission. At the same time, however, as discussed below, the Panel believes it is important that IFPRI focus upon areas it is best suited to address, and not spread its resources across a greater area than it can most productively cultivate, and the mission so broadly construed does not help in this.

2.2 Changes in the External and CGIAR Environment

Recent changes in the external and internal environments within which the CGIAR and, more specifically, IFPRI work have important implications for their priorities and how they operate.

Major recent external developments include:

- continuing globalization and liberalization of domestic and international markets, including not only WTO developments but also marketing innovations as exemplified in the “supermarket revolution” and related events.³ These changes are generating increased demand for research on gains and losses from trade for developing countries (with special emphasis upon the poor), for policies fostering a competitive and quality conscious agriculture in developing countries, for the design and evaluation of safety nets for those adversely affected under liberalized markets, and for research on governance in these conditions.
- changes in the composition, structure and performance of NARS (implying for IFPRI a need to redefine clients and products), e.g., weakening of many national systems, strengthening of others (India, Brazil, China); development of regional and subregional organizations; broader range of research actors (NGOs, private sector, ARIs). Demand for new work from IFPRI includes rethinking research as a public good, and implications for the whole CGIAR, assessing returns to public research in a world of private research, exploring ways of strengthening public-private research partnerships.

³ “The character of the food system and nature of food policy are changing as urbanisation, technical change and the industrialization of the food system transform the way food is produced, marketed and consumed in developing countries.... Food is increasingly produced by commercial growers, feeding long and sophisticated supply chains, and marketing often processed and branded products to mainly urban consumers. Policy is no concerned mainly with famine and food insecurity, but needs to encompass issues like obesity, food safety, and competition policy in the retail sector...” Maxell and Slater, *Food Policy Old and New*, 2003.

- scientific and legal developments, e.g., biotechnology and intellectual property rights. Demand for IFPRI work on ‘enabling policies’ for gaining access to latest scientific techniques via adjusting their existing legal, regulatory, policy and institutional frameworks so that new technology is most effective at enhancing food security and economic well-being of poor rural populations.

These developments taken together mean increased importance to defining and implementing a role for the CGIAR, and IFPRI, as producers of public goods. The comparative advantages of all the CGIAR centres get a new flavour in the context of the new actors, evolving new legal and regulatory constraints, and relaxation of old constraints, in which all private and public institutions now operate. IFPRI has an overarching job as the institution within the CGIAR in which research will be carried out developing and applying ideas and innovations in global public goods, economic welfare, food security, nutrition and health, and safety-net protections.

Recent developments within the CGIAR include:

- The 3rd CGIAR System Review, in 1998, emphasized the need for strengthening policy research in CG system. It also called for strengthened capacity building for policy research (economic, environmental, and science & technology) in developing countries.
- New vision and strategy for the CGIAR: after the 3rd System review, the CGIAR embarked on a process of reform. One of the first steps, an initiative led by TAC, was re-assessing the mission, goals and objectives of the CGIAR in the light of fundamental changes occurring in the global environment. In launching a new vision for a ‘food secure world for all’, the CGIAR in 2000 re-defined its mission and outlined a strategy for identifying new ways to tackle the problem of poverty. The mission was stated as “to achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries, policy and natural resources management”. The strategy was based on seven key planks, the most important of which from IFPRI’s perspective included:
 - a stronger and more explicit emphasis on people and poverty;
 - mobilizing new developments in social, biological and physical sciences;
 - greater attention to Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia;
 - adopting a regional approach to research, and,
 - more attention to developing new types of partnerships.
- Major reforms designed to strengthen science, extend the CGIAR System alliance, streamline governance and maximize impact followed the new vision and strategy. The establishment and implementation of Challenge Programmes (CPs)—designed to address global and regional issues of critical importance, such as combating micronutrient deficiencies affecting more than two billion people, is probably most relevant to this review. IFPRI is a co-leader of the HarvestPlus CP and a key player in two of the three other CPs.

- Rapid growth in investment in policy-related research in the CGIAR, from 12% of the total expenditure in 1998 to 18% in 2004
- On behalf of the CGIAR, the SC is engaged in a systematic and collaborative process to help develop a more cohesive research programme with well-defined priorities for the CGIAR for the next five years (implications not yet clear for IFPRI, except that one of these will likely be focused on policy research).

IFPRI's Response

Recent changes in IFPRI are broadly consistent with these changes in the external environment. The changes also have already had internal impacts stemming from the overall increase in demand for IFPRI's services as reflected in the structure, budget and size of the organization, notably:

- rapid growth in size, from a US \$20 million Centre in 1998 to \$34 million in six years (growing by 31% in 2004 alone), and projected to grow to \$40 million by 2007;
- increase in project funding for special purposes (restricted funding);
- expansion in research and outreach portfolio with the incorporation of the ISNAR programme, initiation of the co-led HarvestPlus CP and the Collective Action and Property Rights (CAPRI) Systemwide Programme;
- a major effort towards outposting staff to countries (decentralization); and,
- changes in IFPRI's programmatic structure, including development of a new IFPRI division covering development strategy and governance.

2.3 Strategy

The process by which IFPRI's current strategy was adopted occurred in 2002-2003. It evolved from a senior research staff retreat in September 2002, and later involved consultations and discussion with other IFPRI staff, the Board of Trustees, and a range of partners in research institutions, governments, and the private sector. The Panel is satisfied that the process was reasonably inclusive. In the Panel's interviews with donors, clients, and peers, no criticism of the strategy development process emerged.

IFPRI's strategy for achieving its mission is in part apparent in its organizational structure. Division of labour among types of activity is achieved through separate but related work in research, capacity strengthening, and communication. Division of labour among broad research areas is indicated in the names of the five Divisions: Development Strategy and Governance; Environment and Production Technology; Food Consumption and Nutrition; Markets, Trade and Institutions; and International Services to National Agricultural Research (with capacity strengthening allocated to the last of these) and communication centred in a separate Communication Division. Of course many projects and activities require operating across these boundaries, and between IFPRI and other

CGIAR centres and NARS, notably through Challenge Programmes and Systemwide Programmes.

The organization of IFPRI also makes sense in terms of the CGIAR context. The Environment and Production Technology Division considers the economic situation into which technological innovations of the CG system must fit. The Food Consumption and Nutrition Division takes the crop varietal and other productivity enhancing work of the CGIAR to the consumer level. The Development Strategy and Governance Division and Markets, Institutions, and Trade Division treat the economic and policy realities, which control the regulatory and political environment that often constrains productivity gains and rural economic growth.

Beyond organizing activities along the lines of these divisions, overall priorities are indicated through the criteria spelled out in the April 2003 Strategy document: potential activities get higher priority by conforming to the above mission and further by addressing “major emerging issues in food security”, focusing on international public goods, and helping “the greatest number of people in deepest need”. Pursuit of the priorities is intended to be furthered through the identification of research “themes”. In the 2003 Strategy document, 12 themes are identified: these often cut across Divisional lines or their proper Divisional home is unclear. Indeed, the Panel understands that a purpose of the Themes is to make sure the Divisional structure does not inadvertently omit high priority activities. The specification of themes is in flux as indicated by the 12 adumbrated in the Mid-Term Plan for 2004-2006 of November 2003 being supplemented by two new ones in the Mid-Term Plan for 2005-2007 of September 2004 that do not fall strictly under the heading of research.

2.4 Priority Setting and Operational Tactics

The issues that the Panel believes call for IFPRI’s attention involve not broad strategy, but rather matters of prioritization and of operational tactics for carrying out IFPRI’s highly ambitious agenda with maximum effectiveness. IFPRI’s strategy lists four criteria for prioritizing its research: (1) conformity with the mission, (2) emerging (as opposed to long-standing) issues, (3) conformity with IFPRI’s comparative advantage, and (4) wishes of stakeholders and partners.

The first of the four criteria is essential and moreover is the mechanism for tying IFPRI’s agenda in with overall CGIAR priorities. The fit appears excellent, consistent with one of the currently emerging Science Council priorities for the CG system, “policy and institutional innovation to reduce poverty and hunger (and) to enhance competitiveness of smallholders.” This criterion could be used to narrow the research agenda. However, the IFPRI strategy document’s discussion under criterion (1) points to things that are inclusive rather than exclusive, most notably “maintain a suitable balance among research, capacity building, and policy communication.”

The IFPRI strategy does identify two more stringent desiderata, “creating international public goods,” and research in areas “where lack of new knowledge is the main constraint to better policymaking”. However, the former is in danger of being ignored in practice in that country-specific activities appear to be looming larger at IFPRI, if there is any trend. Country-specific research can be argued to contribute to global public goods as parts of a broader cross-country comparative research programme or through developing new research methods usable elsewhere. Nonetheless, it is easy for the global public good requirement to be forgotten in the context of enthusiasm for what one can do in a particular country. Indeed, the priority given to the new Development Strategy and Governance Division makes most sense as responding to a perception that the constraint to better policy is generally not the consequence of a lack of knowledge about what effects policies will have. In short, criterion (1) largely is interpreted in such a way as to rule out too little to be helpful; and when that criterion is applicable to IFPRI’s revealed priorities, it works as much against the grain of what IFPRI does as with it.

The third criterion, comparative advantage, could and should be important in prioritization, but the discussion of that criterion is stated in the Strategy document (p.11) in terms that make it amount to giving priority to: (a) doing in the future what IFPRI has done in the past (e.g., surveys) – which rather creates tension with criterion (2); and (b) paying special attention to what fits with the CGIAR and other international partners, which essentially reduces the third criterion to the fourth one.

The fourth criterion, attention to views of stakeholders and partners, makes a difference and is essential when it comes to projects under restrictive funding. This criterion, however, does not add to IFPRI’s own judgment of what research is likely to be most relevant and important; indeed it could become a way of abdicating priority setting.

Where IFPRI has made some substantive choices is in approaches to research and research tools. For an applied policy research institution, IFPRI does not do much work in applied welfare economics, nor does it build optimization models for policy choices or planning. IFPRI does do field surveys and statistical analysis and estimation of household behavioural functions. On the other hand, with respect to methodologies, as opposed to issues, a focus on emerging issues would probably not fit IFPRI well under the comparative advantage criterion. New methods are time intensive, require investigators on the furthest frontiers of their disciplines, and risky. It may be better to leave this area to universities, as IFPRI by and large does – although the ISNAR and DSG divisions appear perhaps too ready to take on this sort of agenda.

IFPRI’s 14 research themes were mentioned earlier in the context of strategy implementation, but as a priority setting device the themes are unhelpful. Almost every topic that involves food or poverty could be made to fit under one or another of them. The Panel indeed has not been able to come up with a plausible research topic that would not fit. A test of a useful priority-setting mechanism is how it identifies projects that have peripheral or low priority in a defensible IFPRI plan of work. For example, research on environmental consequences of chemical-intensive as compared to organic

farming might be left to some other institution, but in IFPRI it would fit comfortably under theme 3. Issues in stimulating industrial investment in rural areas might be left to some other institution, but in IFPRI it is mentioned explicitly under theme 12. Indeed theme 12 even endorses IFPRI research on public goods in urban areas. Themes in fact appear to be more a device for placing all IFPRI research on the same level of priority rather than a tool for choosing among alternative research projects.

The process through which IFPRI does make tough choices about its research is the development and ex-ante review of staff proposals of exploratory projects to be added to the research portfolio. The Panel, however, got no sense of how the four criteria or the research themes are employed in deciding which ideas to pursue (since the criteria and themes themselves rule out so few ideas), or in narrowing down the project agenda once initial ideas are fleshed out. In most research institutions this narrowing has to do as much with the quality of the research design and qualifications of the researchers as with the closeness of fit with subject-matter definitions as broad and comprehensive as the themes are.

The Panel recommends that IFPRI sharpen its system of priority setting so that it will be more transparent how it decides what projects are most appropriately included in IFPRI's research agenda, and which are best left undone or left to other research institutions.

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH, CAPACITY STRENGTHENING, COMMUNICATIONS AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OFFICE

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and assesses IFPRI's programmes by Division. The Panel is impressed, indeed almost overwhelmed, by the volume and variety of research carried out over the 1998-2004 review period. The task of digesting the main features of this work has been greatly facilitated by the briefings the Panel received during the Initial Phase of the review in October 2004, by the many summary documents provided by IFPRI, and by the report of the Centre Commissioned External Review (CCER, Feb 2004). Even so, to generate fully formed judgments of each Division's work would have required immersion in specific publications, reports on current research, and observation of field activities in collaboration with partners, outreach, and communication that are infeasible given the constraints. Therefore the Panel relied on its own individual assessments and on views of donors, peers and clients, as well as on various documents and briefings as time permitted.

Because of differing approaches by the Panel members and the differing situations of the Divisions, the sections of Chapter 3 vary in emphasis but all attempt to cover key elements of each Division's activities and accomplishments, and to assess each Division's work. The CCER was a useful source of detailed assessment of some activities, and IFPRI's response to the CCER was helpful in possibly avoiding some pitfalls of assessment.

3.2 Development Strategies and Governance Division (DSGD)

3.2.1 Introduction

This is a new Division, created in 2003 and operational in 2004, and its research programme is evolving. It builds on projects developed under the previous IFPRI structure (EPTD and TMD) but is developing new initiatives. Its mandate suggests a national, economy-wide perspective: "[to help] identify the preconditions for successful pro-poor growth, developing practical conceptual frameworks and methods for strategic analysis, and strengthening the capacity of some developing countries to formulate and implement national strategies" (IFPRI, DSGD 2004).

Considering the general orientation of the Division and the relevance of the issues addressed under its research programme, the success of DSGD will be very important for IFPRI's overall impact.

3.2.2 Activities

The issues examined by this Division include research and policy advice on development strategies, including cross-country research and single-country policy advice, research on priorities for public investment allocation, on the broad issue of governance, and country support programme and capacity building under the *Strategic Analysis for Knowledge Support* (SAKSS) and *Country and Regional Support Programmes* (CRPS). These topics and related activities are examined under the Division's current six- project structure:

Country Development Strategy, which comprises: (a) cross-country strategy research, including regional support programmes and (b) single-country strategy research. The latter are in depth studies to complement the cross-country research. Current and planned activities for cross-country strategy research focus on: (i) compilation of a global database of country data from different sources: (ii) further work on various aspects of China's development strategy relevant to other countries' potential reforms; and (iii) a conference on non-linearities and thresholds.

Priorities for Public Investment, mostly in India, China, Vietnam, Thailand and recently Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. In many developing countries, the poor allocation of public expenditures is alarming. Research has shown that an inadequate provision of rural public goods contributes to slower growth in agriculture and related industries. DSGD has developed analytical approaches and done empirical analysis on the relative contribution of agricultural research, irrigation, roads, education, etc. for India, China, Vietnam, and Thailand. The Panel understands that future work will examine also how public expenditures are allocated among different sectors, different regions or different population groups.

Strategic Analysis for Knowledge Support System (SAKSS), a key tool in the DSGD country support programme and linked closely to the cross-country and single-country analysis programme. It includes the work on Initiative to End Hunger in Africa and is organized around three broad activities: (i) technical support, communications and outreach, (ii) developing and institutionalizing SAKSS in African countries, (iii) special studies to fill knowledge gaps quickly.

Governance (GOV), a new initiative, at the stage of proposed work. An IFPRI-wide task force was created in July 2004, chaired by a DSGD staff member. It aims at coordinating and supporting research and outreach activities on governance. Still in its inception stage, it is now networking, searching for approaches, relating to people who have worked in this area and has identified four priority areas of research (listed below). DSGD's own project on governance will undergo a review to become a new GRP project this year.

Country and Regional Support Programmes (CRSP) – networks for development strategy research, policy impact and capacity building. Country programmes underway include Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, and China.

Rural-urban linkages - (exploratory: to start in 2005) in planning stages, and linked to previous work under the urban food and nutrition security project housed in FCND and terminated in 2004

3.2.3 Accomplishments

Incorporating the work done prior to the Divisional reorganization, DSGD has produced the following outputs:

- approaches and methodologies. e.g., Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models and Social Accounting Matrices (SAMs) for several countries, household budget surveys. More recently, DSGD has developed country typologies and economy-wide models that use a multi-market (rather than a CGE approach) and is using these models to chart country-development scenarios to 2015;
- public goods such as the SAMs and the prototype CGE models, software and databases;
- capacity building for data collection and organization into SAM format;
- publications (including pre-DSGD that relate to DSGD objectives); from 2000 to 2004, DSDG published 25 journal articles, one book, 29 Research Reports/Food Policy Reviews and 15 Discussion Papers;
- success in setting up a strategy for the Division in a short period of time;
- development of four priority areas for the new research programme on Governance;
- country or regional support programmes are underway in Ethiopia, Uganda, China, Ghana (starting in 2005), Central America, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) project.

3.2.4 Assessment

3.2.4.1 Strategic Issues

Given the Division's research priorities, the new mandate oriented to a more active participation in domestic policy debates in developing countries raises several new challenges, some of which were recognized by the Division Director during Phase I of the review. These challenges include:

- The tradeoffs between time involved in country-specific research and outreach work versus cross-country work.
- How far to go in country-specific strategy work and capacity building and when to disengage?
- Is the predominance of restricted funding going to drive the work more towards downstream activities and less toward research?
- Involvement in research and direct policy advice could require staff with different talents and skills. Thus, what are the implications for staff recruitment? What are the trade-offs between hiring people for longer term research applicable across countries and hiring situation-specific human capital to address a particular capacity-building or outreach programme? Even if the decision is made to have separate staffs, there remains the problem of

integrating the Washington work with the country-specific work and being able to take advantage of interactions and possible feedbacks between the two.

- Should DSGD put more staff in the field?

The Panel raised two broad questions to guide its assessment of the Division. One is about the development of a specific niche for DSGD vis-à-vis other entities, and the second is about what can be realistically expected of DSGD in advancing its research programme given its size and the broad and challenging objectives.

Regarding DSGD's niche in the area of country-specific work on development strategies, it is relevant to consider the roles of, for example, the World Bank (WB) and Inter-american Development Bank (IDB) in national strategies. Considering the WB's large research staff, its lending programme and its influence on the policies of many countries, it could be claimed that the WB is already doing in many countries what the DSGD is aiming to do, particularly for country-specific work with an economy-wide perspective. The WB with all of its resources could be stronger on economy-wide research and advice. Nevertheless, one important aspect on which IFPRI places more emphasis is capacity building, while the WB has decided to give less importance to this area. In trying to better understand where DSGD's niche lies in the area of national strategies, at least conceptually it would seem that DSGD's distinguishing elements are: experience with long-term cross-country research, a programme of country-specific support activities, and a focus on capacity building at the country level. The Panel considered whether it is mainly the first and the third elements that perhaps give IFPRI's its relative strength over other institutions, and whether by limiting its focus to only a few countries, IFPRI would put at risk the international public good (IPG) element of its work.

What can be realistically expected of the Division in advancing its research programme in an innovative, rigorous and policy-relevant way, while at the same time maintaining a strong engagement in domestic policy debates and capacity building in specific countries? It should be remembered that, no matter how much energy IFPRI puts into specific country work, without a core of solid research activities to support that work, IFPRI ceases to be IFPRI. It simply becomes another advisory/consulting group, and not even very different from what the WB and others already do in their country programmes. In realistic terms, DSGD can focus on some specific themes and has done so. An example of a successful selection and execution of research orientation is the work on public expenditures (discussed above).

Given IFPRI's limited resources, at best such an engagement would have to be restricted to very few countries. The selection of those countries into which DSGD, and IFPRI more generally, should concentrate resources is a delicate problem involving not merely the poverty situations of individual countries, but their institutional capacities, levels of corruption, long-term commitments to policy strategies and their long-term ability to absorb IFPRI's intellectual contribution.⁴ The strategy of country support not

⁴ The case of Zimbabwe in the late 1980s was an example of IFPRI becoming involved with large investments of time and money based on expectations of having an impact and developing more

only implies a concentration of effort, but implies risks, particularly in regions where there is political unrest and instability, and high levels of corruption. To a large extent it is a question for IFPRI as an institution, and not a unique problem of DSGD. This is a difficult dilemma and one that the donor community will have to live with considering the high priority assigned to collaborative work in such countries.

This Division is now deeply engaged in domestic policy debate and capacity building in a few countries. This combination of simultaneously aiming at rigorous and relevant research, capacity building and outreach in such a diverse area of analysis is a new challenge for DSGD. Beyond the tradeoff between the difficulties of research and outreach, there is the question of the design of development strategies. The Panel recognizes that DSGD faces a particularly complex task. The task must consider the breadth of the issues addressed, the complicated interaction between economic variables and political and social considerations, the uncharted methodological territory in which DSGD is working, and the gross inadequacy of relevant data available for the Division's analytical efforts.

From the research viewpoint, while recognizing the explicit commitment to keep an economy-wide perspective in this Division, readers of IFPRI's work in the area are left confused regarding the balance and priorities of research with respect to: an economy wide focus versus a sectoral focus; an agricultural focus versus a more rural focus (the rural non-farm economy); and a territorial focus versus a sectoral focus. When reading the DSGD material, the reader cannot but observe a strong food and agricultural emphasis in their analysis. The rural economy and its integration into the national economy as well as its contribution to national growth appear to be largely missing.

Regarding whether IFPRI should focus on the contribution of agriculture or the contribution of the *rural* economy to national development and poverty, there is a body of literature that suggests that rural non-farm activities are of growing importance, especially pro-poor, and in some cases not based on the expansion of agricultural productivity but the expansion of the secondary and tertiary industries in rural areas. This point has been emphasized in A.D. Foster and M. Rosenzweig's recent study on India.⁵ They further remark: "there are substantial regions of the world where poor climate or topology provide little opportunity for the expansion of agricultural yields in the absence of sustained subsidies". In these regions poverty will be reduced either by migration and/or rural non-farm economic growth. Hopefully this is not the case for many regions, but this does highlight the weakness of focusing only on agriculture in designing development strategies.

collaborative work with persons in this country. The IFPRI team at the time anticipated neither changes in the political situation nor what turned out to be the fragility of institutions, both of which reduced the impact of IFPRI's efforts significantly and undermined the value of IFPRI's investments.

⁵ Foster, A., and M.R. Rosenzweig. 2004. "Agricultural productivity growth, rural economic diversity, and economic reforms: India, 1970-2000. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 52(3): 509-542.

3.2.4.2 Programmes

IFPRI's research on the theme of *pro-poor public investment, priorities, finance and governance* is an example of relevant, innovative and rigorous empirical research very much in line with what makes IFPRI unique. The Panel endorses the relevance of this new dimension. The two levels of research - allocation of public expenditures *among* different sectors and allocation *within* the rural and agricultural sectors - are needed and they complement each other. If there is an anti-rural bias in government expenditures it is important to examine that as part of the '*among* sectors analysis'.

The Panel discussed whether there is a role for DSGD in promoting and strengthening *social project evaluation* of individual projects (ex ante and ex post) for the screening of public expenditures. This has not been examined in the past. The individual investment project approach would complement the broader nation-wide approach in assessing the relative contribution of agricultural research, roads, irrigation, education, and other variables. While recognizing that measuring all externalities is seldom feasible, the process of submitting all major public investment projects to the discipline of a rigorous social project evaluation has been critical in some countries in fostering a mentality among the government agencies about the need to be selective, and to question the often understated projections of real cost and overstatement of potential benefits. Perhaps as part of SAKSS, DSGD and IFPRI could play a catalytic role in promoting the activity of social project evaluation of public expenditures, including dissemination of the techniques and lessons from past evaluations under its CRSP activities.⁶

There is no need to defend IFPRI's decision to have a specific division that would be strong on quantitative research on the main links between the overall economy and the agricultural and food economy. It is now widely recognized that non-agricultural and non-food policies can have a strong impact on food production and consumption but the question is how to approach it. DSGD plans to keep its options open with regard to methodological approaches for this economy-wide analysis and not commit itself to the CGE approach as "the" only relevant research tool, a view endorsed by the Panel.⁷

The stated objectives of the *cross-country approach to analysing development strategies* and the list of well-recognized experts listed as outside collaborators supporting IFPRI's in-house staff (DSGD Plan for 2005) point to a promising future in terms of output from this activity.

There is a growing consensus that cross-country studies typically are not straightforwardly applicable to single countries. There is, therefore, a need for country-specific case studies. Such studies can take a more disaggregated approach and capture

⁶ ISNAR was actively involved in the field of social returns to agricultural research. The Panel's view with respect DSGD possible role is somewhat different, which is oriented to capacity building and development of social project evaluation programs in various countries.

⁷ A CGE approach may be appropriate in some cases, but not in others. Indeed, they are based on many assumptions that cannot be tested, and final results are as good as the judgment and intuition of the analyst. Their relative strength is more on the shorter-medium term horizon, and less on the long-term perspective where dynamic considerations become critical.

better household and firm characteristics by type, moving beyond “the representative agent”. The country strategy support programmes are also very important learning experiences for IFPRI, i.e., the research itself draws on country experiences. The Panel, therefore, endorses the combination of cross-country and country-specific studies.

The *Strategic Analysis for Knowledge Support System* is a laudable activity for IFPRI, with great interest for selected countries. It should, however, be well-grounded in IFPRI research or it will not be distinguishable from work carried out by a high-level consulting firm.

Given the newness of the initiative, the Panel believes it is premature to evaluate the *Governance Task Force*. Nevertheless, the Panel recognizes considerable progress in the identification of four priority areas and on-going work in the drafting of concept papers in each of these areas. The four priority areas are: (a) decentralization and local governance – learning from successes; (b) agricultural service provision (extension and education with ISNAR and in the implementation of land reform); (c) governance and pro-poor growth; and (d) research on multi-stakeholders and governance. The Panel noted that while it is true that corruption and insecurity are among the most critical issues underlying the concerns about governance in development, the Panel did not ascertain how the Task Force would approach directly the problems of alleviating corruption and insecurity as it affects the food and agricultural sectors and the rural economy. More input should be sought from the World Bank as it has been examining the issue of corruption in developing countries for quite some time now. Finally, IFPRI should consider how corruption would influence the optimal choice of specific policy instruments as they might differ in their degree of appropriateness depending on the particular corruption situation of a country.⁸

Realistically, the Panel concludes that it is premature to try to evaluate the impact of the work under the DSGD Division at this stage, considering its recent creation and the breadth of its task. What the Panel has attempted here is to offer some reflections on its general orientation of this Division.

The Panel recommends an external evaluation of the DSGD two years from now.

⁸ To illustrate, in the design of unilateral trade reforms in several Latin American countries prior to the Uruguay Round, the decision was taken to make tariffs the only border measure of protection, to remove quantitative restrictions and import licenses, and lower the tariff dispersion. A strong argument was the lack of transparency and susceptibility to corruption inherent in QR, licensing and a wide tariff dispersion. Also in high-corruption countries the optimal degree of regulation may be much less than where government agencies are more transparent and officials more accountable.

3.3 Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND)

3.3.1 Introduction

The Food Consumption and Nutrition Division (FCND) is one of the two largest divisions within IFPRI. It has a clear focus on the consumption side of the agriculture, food and nutrition complex. The Division has been favourably assessed in earlier External Reviews (1992 and 1998) and most present programmes and projects (see below) link back to earlier projects. Much of the earlier work was focused on food subsidies, commercialisation, effect of nutrition on labour productivity, consequences of diet energy deficiency, rural labour and credit markets, gender and intra-household inequalities, micronutrient deficiencies, famine relief and self-targeting schemes for food aid allocation.

3.3.2 Goals and Objectives

The overall objective for the FCND is to conduct research that provides solutions to food insecurity and reduction of malnutrition in all forms at the household, community and country levels.

3.3.3 Activities

IFPRI's research evolves around the 14 institution-level themes and FCND has focused on almost half of them. Most of the Division's project portfolio falls under half a dozen Global Regional Programmes (GRP). Some of these have been ongoing since the start of the evaluation period (1998) under different titles but have also evolved programmatically.

1) *Diet Quality, Diet Changes (GRP 24)*: The chief nutritional problem in several developing countries has shifted from undernutrition (calories) to malnutrition in various forms. The chief aim of the project is to identify agricultural, food and nutrition policies that improve the diet quality of the poor.

2) *Large-scale Interventions to Enhance Human Capital Formation (GRP 28)*: The overall objective of this project is to improve the quality, impacts, and cost-effectiveness of interventions to reduce poverty in both short and long term; analyze institutional factors that affect performance; and build capacity for the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective interventions

3) *Urban Food and Nutrition Security (MP 14)*: This project aimed at identifying the specific nutritional problems in urban areas in poor countries and suggesting policies that mitigate urban poverty. The programme terminated in 2004 as planned, but some follow-up as a theme (urban-rural linkages) will be carried out within DSGD.

4) *Pathways from Poverty (GRP 26):* This project “assesses the policies, interventions, and other factors that lead to sustainable poverty reduction and nutritional improvements”. It uses multi-year household survey data, initially from six countries, to analyse the long-term consequences for poverty and malnutrition of various “shocks”.

5) *HIV/AIDS and Food Security (GRP33):* The project aims to investigate what food, nutrition and agricultural policies can strengthen HIV/AIDS prevention and mitigate the consequences in countries with large numbers of affected people.

6) *Policy Process in Food and Nutrition Security (GRP 25):* This new project will focus on the reasons why policies and interventions that are known to reduce malnutrition are not pursued.

7) *Gender and Intra-household Aspects of Food Policy (MP 17):* This project was initiated in 1995 and terminated in 2002. The chief aim has been to improve food and agricultural policies through better understanding of how food and other resources are allocated within households.

8) *Rural Finance Policies for Food Security of the Poor (MP5):* This project, ongoing since 1993, was terminated in 2001. The main objective has been to identify policies and institutional arrangements that help the poor integrate themselves into sustainable savings and credit systems.

3.3.4 Accomplishments

Publications by FCND staff in peer-reviewed journals have averaged about 25 per year over the 1998-2004 period. Some ten books and 60 book chapters have also been published. In addition almost 140 FCND Discussion Papers and 30 Research Reports have been issued. The latter are typically co-authored by a large number of researchers from several Divisions (and outsiders).

Besides publications, the FCND has collected a large number of data sets in several countries at the household and community levels, e.g. the Consumption Panel Data Set. FCND has also been innovative in developing methods for randomized evaluation (e.g., of *Progresa* in Mexico). The Division has further developed indicators of proxies of income that has relied on collected and verified data, used for instance to improve the targeting efficiency of food interventions in Egypt.

3.3.5 Assessment

3.3.5.1 Publications

A high proportion of the peer-reviewed articles by FCND researchers are published in general development journals of high standards, such as *World Development*, *Journal of Development Studies*, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, and *Journal of Development Economics*. An equal proportion of articles appear in respectable journals specialised in agriculture-food-nutrition (*AJAE*, *Food and*

Nutrition Bulletin, *Quarterly Journal of Agricultural Economics* and *Food Policy*). FCND staff has also published work in what in the Panel's view are highly ranked general economic journals, such as *Economic Journal*, *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, *Oxford Economic Papers*, and *Economic Modelling*. None of the publications, however, are in the top ten general economic journals, such as *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, and *Quarterly Journal of Economics*.⁹

The FCND publications in nutrition/paediatrics/epidemiology journals seem to be in higher ranking nutrition journals than the economic and development journals. Examples are *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, *Journal of Nutrition*, and *International Journal of Epidemiology* and *Journal of Paediatrics*. It is notable that the most cited articles from IFPRI are produced by the FCND and are invariably in nutrition journals.

While the Panel is impressed by the quality of the FCND's publications in peer-reviewed journals, it believes that an average of 1.4 publications per researcher per year in such journals is on the low side for the type of work done in FCND and also in relation to the large output of Discussion Papers. Furthermore, the number of articles in peer-reviewed journals seems to have dropped in the last two years, which raises concern.

3.3.5.2 Programmes

A new programme that looks promising and is in line with IFPRI's mandate is *Diet Quality* project. Over the last 10 years it has been shown that in many developing countries, the main nutritional problem is not undernutrition in the sense of people having access to too little food (calories) but malnutrition. In more than a dozen developing countries, malnutrition, as manifested in overweight, obesity and unbalanced diets in terms of micronutrients, and has been recognised as the more severe problem. In many other countries, including China with its 1.3 billion people, there are signs that malnutrition in these forms, and the ensuing increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases, is rapidly increasing. The *Diet Quality* project, aimed at identifying the reasons for and consequences of malnutrition, and at finding effective intervention policies, is a timely and urgent undertaking. The FCND should have a strong comparative advantage for undertaking research in this area, emanating from its long-standing familiarity with both nutrition and the underlying economic and policy factors.

Large-scale Interventions to Enhance Human Capital Formation, a project formerly with the more informative title "Evaluations of Targeted Interventions", also fits well into FCND's revealed competence. IFPRI has done research in this area over a long period and its publication record is good. In the Panel's view, this is a highly relevant and important field of research. Governments in many developing countries have abandoned broad-based interventions for attempting to reach the poor with price-subsidised food, because of weak targeting efficiency, corruption, and a heavy fiscal burden. Many of the weaknesses with these programmes have been revealed by IFPRI research. In most cases,

⁹ It is noteworthy that some non-IFPRI economists working on food-and-nutrition related issues occasionally publish in top ten general economics journals, e.g. Jere Behrman, Anil Deolalikar, Angus Deaton, Bob Fogel, Martin Ravallion, Mark Rosenzweig, John Strauss and Duncan Thomas.

governments have instead initiated smaller, more narrowly focused and targeted programmes with the aim to reach the poorest and most malnourished. There is yet no clear evidence regarding what type of narrowly targeted projects work the best in varying environments. Continued research by IFPRI/FCND is needed to fill this gap in knowledge and would be a truly international public good.

The project *Policy Processes in Food Security and Nutrition* aims at finding answers to the question about why governments do not adopt policies and interventions that are known to lead to increased food security and reduced malnutrition. This question relates intimately to the broader question about why there is bad governance (governments) in most other areas (education, health care, poverty-safety nets, etc) in so many countries. An enormous political-economy literature on this issue has come forth in recent decades. The Panel would have preferred to see more detail in the Division's Internal Programme Review (2004) about what investigation methods the FCND plans to use and how these methods distinguish themselves, if at all, from methods used in the political-economy literature at large. The reasons for bad food and nutrition policies are not likely to be very different from bad policies in a wide range of other spheres.

Although the longitudinal micro-level data set being generated by IFPRI for six countries in its research on *pathways from poverty* is valuable and may be an IPG, the Panel doubts whether this project, focused on small specific communities, is likely to come to policy-relevant conclusions that have more than local validity.

The *HIV/AIDS* project is, in the Panel's view, a high-risk project in the sense that IFPRI seems to have little experience and track record in this area of research and currently only one senior researcher in FCND is assigned to the topic.

The *Urban Food and Nutrition Security* project, terminated in 2004, seems to have resulted in a rather meagre output in terms of publication in peer-reviewed journals (although some may still be forthcoming).

The *Gender and Intra-household Programme* which ended in 2002 had been highly successful in terms of number of publications in peer-reviewed journals (roughly 50, out of which a little more than half were published since 1998). This project has helped bring much-needed attention to gender issues in the food and nutrition literature at large.

The *Rural Finance Programme*, terminated in 2001, produced a fair amount of publications in the form of reports, discussion papers, book chapters and conference proceedings, although only a handful of articles in peer-reviewed journals. A major accomplishment was the compilation of a database on 1,300 microfinance institutions world-wide.

According to the CCER report (Table 4), FCND has 36 ongoing projects (other sources give different numbers, depending on the definition of projects). In the Panel's

opinion this is too large a number given the staff strength of 18 senior researchers, and the variety of topics addressed in the projects.

3.3.6 Overall assessment

As shown by the Panel's interviews of IFPRI stakeholders and peers, FCND's work is well known and highly regarded among academics based in developed countries. The Panel concurs with that view, and would like to commend IFPRI for the overall achievements of the Division. It suggests that more effort should be put into disseminating the results of the research in developing countries. IFPRI management should also take steps to reverse the recent decline in publications in refereed journals, and projects such as "pathways of poverty" and HIV/AIDS should be carefully assessed before any consideration is given to their expansion, or even their continuation. A more focused research project portfolio in the Division is also suggested.

3.4 Markets, Trade, and Institutions Division (MTID)

3.4.1 Introduction

MTID focuses on the process of exchange between producers and consumers by analysing domestic and international markets, the factors contributing to inefficiencies in the long chain between producers and consumers, and the institutions and infrastructure that can reduce transaction costs in domestic and global markets. The overarching objective of this effort is to reduce these transaction costs and enhance market efficiency resulting in improved welfare for the poor, in particular, higher prices for producers and lower prices for consumers.

The Division "was restructured in April 2003 to provide IFPRI with a stronger trade and domestic policy focus".¹⁰ MTID resulted from the merger of parts of the former Markets and Structural Studies Division (MSSD) and the Trade and Macroeconomics Division (MTD). MTID incorporated the trade-related research of TMD, and the economy-side modeling went to DSGD. The purpose of this reorganization was to strengthen the work on trade and on domestic markets, as well as to provide a stronger focus on the links between international trade policies and domestic markets, including the consideration of institutional factors and infrastructure.

3.4.2 Activities and Achievements

In this section the Panel emphasizes the current structure of the research programme, but the discussion below on accomplishments and the overall assessment refers to activities under both the current and previous Divisional structure. In terms of publications since 1998 (MTID/MSSD), this Division's reports nine books, six research

¹⁰ Report on Achievements in 2004 and Plans for 2005, MTID, Dec. 2004, p.1.

reports, about 52 refereed journal articles, and 36 book chapters which is slightly below IFPRI's average in terms of publications per researcher.

Within the *Globalization and Markets project* (GRP2) specific attention is given to analysing the economic barriers that prevent smallholder farmers in developing countries from realizing greater opportunities in domestic, regional, and global markets. The research has had a strong applied and policy orientation. Some of the key activities and highlights include: a long-term project in Bangladesh that assessed food rationing systems, liberalization of input and output markets, and investments infrastructure and agricultural research, and devised targeted safety nets (book published); study assessing the experience of six Sub-Saharan African countries with agricultural market reform (book published); a synthesis book on food regulation and trade issues (published), and a book manuscript on agriculture in the WTO (in the review process).

Within the *Participation in High Value Agriculture* project (GRP27), research focuses on: (1) identifying trends and issues in world and developing-country markets of high value commodities; (2) identifying threats and opportunities for poor and small-scale producers and consumers of high value products arising from changing supply chains and demand trends and from food safety, sanitary and phyto-sanitary concerns; and (3) analysing options for addressing policy and transaction cost barriers to increased participation of smallholders, the rural poor, and women in high-value sectors. Highlights of the work include: completed reviews of global trends and issues in livestock and fish, a study on global trends in fruits and vegetables (nearing completion), a multi-country study of the relative competitiveness of smallholder livestock production (ongoing), a study of diversification in northern Vietnam (final stage), and several studies in the planning or very early stages (diversification and income growth, horticultural exports from Africa, and retail consolidation and contract farming).

The *Institutions for Market Exchanges* project (GRP23), not yet formally approved, will examine the market dynamics that have led to inadequate provisions of institutions and infrastructure and design effective policies aimed at strengthening rural factor and product markets. Research is already underway to assess the impact of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) on agriculture and the rural sector; and the impact of infrastructure and food chain on the livelihoods of migration of landless households in Bangladesh.

The *South Asia Initiative* (SAI) (GRPGSP1) focuses on the emerging challenges to agriculture of the South Asia region, and their implications for food security and poverty alleviation. Launched in 2002, SAI is a multi-divisional effort led by MTID and the Communications Division (CD), and one that involves a strong outreach and capacity building component. The research focuses on four broad areas: trade liberalization, economic reform and food security; market reforms and food management; agricultural diversification, vertical integration and participation of smallholders; and, changing structure of seed industry. An important achievement has been the establishment of the *Policy Analysis and Advisory Network for South Asia* (PAANSA), a network of agricultural policymakers, advisors, and analysts in South Asia consisting of about 50

members from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Four PAANSA meetings were held in 2004 in the region.

3.4.3 Assessment

In general terms, after conversations with staff and reviewing the research output under the previous and present organizations, the review panel concurs that the restructuring which lead to the creation of MTID was a wise decision for IFPRI. An important advantage of the new structure is that it should help bring together IFPRI's research on international trade and domestic market institutions. This is particularly relevant considering that as result of (partial) unilateral trade liberalization and the formation of regional economic blocks, integration of markets is no longer intra-country but also, increasingly, beyond borders. Moreover, the creation of DSGD suggests a division of labour between MTID and DSGD where economy wide aspects, previously under Trade and Macroeconomics, would now fall under DSGD's mandate.

3.4.3.1 Globalization and Markets (including WTO and regional trade agreements)

The work of MTID and outside collaborators has made an important contribution to the area of food regulation and safety¹¹, an under-researched area rapidly emerging as one of paramount importance particularly for trade in high value perishable products. It is thus complementary to MTID work in high value products and should be continued.

Research on agricultural trade negotiations in the WTO and their implications for developing countries should rank high on MTID's agenda. Developing country negotiators have to assess the relative merits of many competing negotiation proposals, for which they often lack the required technical support from their own countries. In recent years, except for very few studies¹², IFPRI's WTO-related trade research appears weak in terms of research capabilities, output and presence in the field, principally due to lack of experienced staff. In the comments the Panel received from peers, disappointment that IFPRI was not more prominent in current discussions on trade negotiations was one of the criticisms that emerged most. The Panel believes that considerably more effort and focus are required if IFPRI is to re-establish its identity in this area. The topic is broad and the MTID team is small (nine Research Fellows). IFPRI's comparative advantage relevant to this topic should, therefore, be considered carefully within the organization. IFPRI has a formal understanding with the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and FAO for cooperation in some aspects of trade policy analysis but the substantive linkages are tenuous. The Panel notes that this is an area of research and policy advice of increasing competition among researchers in other organizations, NGOs, and think tanks, e.g., World Bank, FAO, OECD and academic institutions.

¹¹ Josling, Roberts and Orden (2004) *Food Safety, Food Regulation and Trade*.

¹² e.g., Diaz-Bonilla et al. (2004) "Thinking Inside the Boxes"

Whether or not IFPRI should seek to develop and maintain its own global trade modeling capacity was a topic among many discussed at length by the Panel. An alternative approach would be for IFPRI to focus on a new role, i.e., becoming an independent evaluator of the 10 or so global trade models available, by making comparisons, examining assumptions and their robustness, considering how and why their results and, in short, become a synthesizer rather than a producer of new projections. Systematic reviews of these 10 or so global models and their differences in results and assumptions are rarely conducted. These trade projections studies have escaped the critical assessment of the profession, no doubt influenced by opaqueness in presenting the key assumptions that drive the results. The credibility of the global modeling projections is at stake. Given the 2020 Vision project, it would make sense to strengthen modeling capacity, but this capacity would have to be sufficiently credible to have an impact and not simply be one more set of projections, among the many. The Panel had neither sufficient time nor information and analysis on which to make a judgment as to which way IFPRI should move in this area. The Panel believes, however, that IFPRI should give serious attention to the issue of what its contribution will be in the area of global trade modeling, as well as the expertise, partnerships and resources required to effectively make this contribution. As part of that process, IFPRI should also undertake a systematic review of the various global models.

With respect to the domestic policy reforms required to capture the benefits of trade, countries need to have in place effective institutions, working product markets and factor markets, and macroeconomic and political stability. It is well recognized that more trade openness is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for sustained growth. MTID expects to concentrate on product and factor markets and institutions, where there is less competition from other institutions. Even though factor market analysis is not explicit on the MTID agenda, and rightly so in the Panel's view, the Panel endorses the decision of MTID to emphasize domestic markets and institutions in developing countries; there is a strong need for such analysis, yet few providers of rigorous and relevant analysis.

The food retail component of this Project was added very recently, and it seems to be an appropriate choice for future work, considering the rapid changes in retail and processing sectors throughout the world and the impact this trend could have on small holder competitiveness.

As for the work on *regional trade agreements*, the MTID and DSGD project on market chain analysis of CAFTA should not, in the Panel's opinion, have priority considering the dearth of information on key parameters and the likely relevance of the results. By contrast, the proposed research on technical barriers to trade in CAFTA and institution building and market chain analysis to enhance the supply response and competitiveness of the food and agricultural industry in Central America deserves more priority.

The Panel considered what the balance should be between work on the global trading system and on country-specific domestic policy analysis. MTID's effective

involvement in the discussion of the global trading system is limited. Currently, the balance in MTID activities is heavily weighted toward country-specific domestic policy analysis. Given existing resources, the Panel wonders whether MTID can expand work on the global trading system and on multilateral trade negotiation strategies without reducing resources allocated to country-specific work. This underscores the point made earlier: the need for setting clear priorities in the Division and an operational plan for achieving specific goals.

3.4.3.2 Participation in High Value Agriculture

Work in this area is relatively new, except for some noteworthy achievements in the analysis of livestock and fish products trends.

A dominant theme of this Project and one that is emerging as a very critical issue in development is *the future of smallholder farming*. The Panel concurs with the emphasis given to this topic in MTID and believes IFPRI can make an important contribution in this area. Farming is becoming an increasingly complex activity, more capital intensive, with greater risk in an environment of a more open economy. Moreover, the rapid changes taking place in agro-processing (increasing concentration) and retail (the so-called supermarket revolution) will put increasing pressure on smaller-size operations. The Panel, therefore, applauds IFPRI's decision to single out the future of smallholder farming as a research priority at IFPRI. Nevertheless, the Panel wishes to emphasize that research should not only be focused on "saving" the small farmer, but should also address the question of the transition of small holders to contract farming, the growth in production scale, or to other activities, including the integration of family labor in off-farm employment and migration. Moreover, in addition to dealing with the specific case of high value products, the Panel suggests that MTID research should be broadened to address the more general issue across a whole range of farm production activities.

The focus of the analysis under the smallholder theme seems primarily oriented to the analysis of forward linkages in the marketing chain, with an emphasis on output markets. It is the Panel's understanding that MTID is not going to examine the influence of distortions in rural factor markets (e.g. issues related to farm size, property rights institutions, water markets, rural finance, technology, human capital, and labour mobility and rural family integration with non-farm employment), which have been identified in many studies as critical issues regarding the smallholder adjustment process. It is hard to see how MTID would have the manpower required to tackle both factor and product markets, even though both are critical parts of the story. In the Panel's view, there should be closer interaction between staff in MTID and EPTD on this topic of factor markets, as there will be considerable aspects of relevance to both.

3.4.3.3 Institutions for Market Exchanges

As this Project is just getting underway, there is little output to assess at this stage. The activities seem well conceived, but here again the relative effort here versus that of other MTID activities will have to be carefully considered. Aspects of the CAFTA work were already discussed above.

3.4.3.4 South Asia Initiative (SAI)

Of the new activities in this Division, the SAI appears to be the strongest, in terms of clarity of objectives, maturity of the research programme, existing staff and collaborators, and research, networking and outreach activities. The SAI received a strong endorsement from the recent CCER, an endorsement generally supported by this Panel.

Taking a regional perspective is attractive for IFPRI's researchers and for their local collaborators; it brings in a depth of understanding and greater specificity in the policy analysis and thus greater relevance. It exploits complementarities, develops more closely linked policy research networks, and increases the chances of influencing the actual policy process. In the Panel's view, however, the research component under the SAI could be better integrated with the rest of the research activities in MTID.

The Panel believes that the SAI model is probably transferable to other regions. However, there are certain preconditions which should not be underestimated, particularly IFPRI's reputation in this region due to its continuous involvement for many years.

3.4.3 Overall assessment

The new structure of MTID covers a diverse set of issues for a relatively small Division. Given the human resources available, the set of research questions is perhaps too large, not because the themes and projects selected are unimportant or not related to one another, but because the structure and diversity of the agenda is potentially unsuited to the capacities of the limited number of experienced researchers comprising the MTID. The limited human resources available restricts the degree of specialization of research skills of the Division and inhibits the potential complementarities that might arise from a greater number of specialists engaging across the diverse set of themes. Moreover, the high turnover of post docs and the difficulty in attracting and holding experienced researchers more generally reduces both the depth and continuity of lines of research. As presently constituted, the MTID's platter is, in the Panel's view, too full.

In specific topics of high relevance for IFPRI but on which MTID is not equipped to handle in-house, an option to consider is the visiting fellow/commissioned work model, which IFPRI has adopted in the past.¹³

The Panel recommends that MTID carry out a review of the work done in the field of global modelling and agricultural trade negotiations, with a view to determining how IFPRI can best make use of that work, and whether or not IFPRI should do its own modelling.

¹³ This approach has proven extraordinarily influential for example for synthesizing trade policy issues, e.g., by Harry Johnson and Max Corden in the past, and more recently by Jagdish Bawghati and Tim Josling, trade economists who produced scholarly periodic reviews of current trade issues, highlighting recent theoretical advances, major empirical findings, and discussing principal policy implications.

3.5 Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD)

3.5.1 Introduction

EPTD is one of the largest divisions of IFPRI. The restructuring of the Centre has resulted in both programmatic and personnel changes to this Division. Some earlier projects, together with their leading scientists, have been integrated into this Division while others have been transferred to different Divisions. Such changes have offered opportunities for the Division to recruit new talent within its re-structured project portfolio.

3.5.2 Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of the Division is to achieve agricultural growth and poverty reduction with environmental sustainability. The major objectives include: 1) to assist policymakers and analysts to understand ways and means of addressing food availability, equity and affordability issues, and 2) to seek possible solutions from local, regional as well as global perspectives. Thus, the research work of the Division concentrates on ways of increasing agricultural production in developing countries so as to enhance poor people's access to food without degrading the environment.

3.5.3 Activities

Carrying some 10 or more projects per year during 1998-2004, and multiple activities or 'sub-projects' within them, attests to the wide and diverse mandate of EPTD. Current projects include:

3.5.3.1 *Special Project on Global Trends in Food Supply and Demand (IMPACT special project)*: This project was initiated in 1993 with the aim of developing an analytical tool that can examine and generate the state-of-the-art alternative futures for global food supply, demand, trade, policies, and food security. It is a multi-country model that is periodically updated and extended with consideration of newly emerged issues. The integration of the Water Simulation Model enables this IMPACT model to project not only the world food situation, but also the world water security situation. Plans are underway to update the base year, disaggregate regions and countries, add more commodities and consider new aspects such as climate change, risk scenarios and gender.

3.5.3.2 *Property Rights and Collective Action for Natural Resource Management (MP11)*: This project was initiated in 1993. A number of studies of how property rights and collective action regimes impact on the management and productivity of rangeland, forestry, agroforestry, water and cropland have been carried out. The programme is now moving towards a new focus that will emphasize integrating equity and poverty alleviation criteria with traditional efficiency and sustainability criteria in the

assessment of alternative property rights regimes and collective action regimes for natural resources.

3.5.3.3 Spatial Analysis Group (GRPSP2): GRPSP2 was established in 2003 in acknowledgement of the basic notion that not only does location matter but that it matters particularly for the world's poor. It was built on previous work done under GRP1. The current GRPSP2 research agenda and portfolio is in a state of flux. There are currently three groups of activities in which the group is involved: (1) economic assessment of technical change, a heritage from the team's involvement in the former GRP1; (2) the development and application of new approaches to development strategy formulation, particularly the spatial dimensions of such approaches; and (3) tradeoffs in the provision of ecosystem services associated with the transformation and use of natural ecosystems for agricultural purposes. In addition, the spatial analysis group is in the process of being integrated with the water resources and global food supply and demand trends to address the IFPRI theme on global food, resources and global change.

3.5.3.4 Sustainable Development of Less-favoured Lands (GRP5): The programme seeks to contribute to reduced poverty, increased food security and more sustainable use of natural resources in less-favoured areas by identifying effective strategies for more profitable and sustainable development in these areas, by strengthening the capacity of governments and other stakeholders to identify and implement such strategies, and by increasing awareness of these opportunities. Research has been conducted in hillsides, rainfed areas, highlands and dryland areas in East Africa, West Asia and North Africa and Central America.

3.5.3.5 Water Resource Allocation and Policies (GRP22): This project was launched in 1996. The objective is to understand how different ways of managing water affect food production, rural livelihood, poverty, and the environment, and to suggest fair and efficient mechanisms of allocating and using water at global, river basin and local or irrigation system level.

3.5.3.6 Collective Action and Property Rights Systemwide Initiative (CAPRi): CAPRi is a systemwide network project launched in 1998 with an overarching goal of contributing to policies and practices that alleviate rural poverty by analysing and disseminating knowledge on the ways collective action and property rights institutions influence the efficiency, equity, and sustainability of natural resource use. CAPRi has run three competitive grant programmes in the period reviewed by the Panel. Funding decisions are made by the CAPRi Executive Committee, an independent group of experts that advises the programme, after recommendations from an independent Proposal Review Panel.

3.5.3.7 Genetic Resource Policies: Biodiversity and Biotechnology (GRP1): EPTD leads this multi-centre project which evolved from the Agricultural Science and Technology Policy programme. The focus is on generating analytical methods and new information through analysis of public policies in order to improve the funding, performance, and social impact of public and private agricultural sciences and technology

institutions worldwide and to make these technologies accessible to the poor. At present, the project focuses on local biodiversity conservation and biotechnology, and mainly on how these genetic resources meet the needs of the poor.

3.5.3.8 Programme on Biosafety System (GRP 34): This programme originated in the former ISNAR and came under the IFPRI/EPTD umbrella in April 2004. It is a collaborative effort, with a wide range of international and national partners that focuses on policies, institutions and incentives for improving biosafety. The goal is to enhance food and nutrition-related science and technology policy serving poor people. The purpose of the programme is to facilitate bio-safety inclusion within a sustainable development strategy, anchored by agriculture-led economic growth, trade and environment objectives. The current activities include: capacity building for implementing biosafety regulatory systems at the country subregional level; regulatory cost and risk assessment and competitive grants programme; and biosafety guidance for product development.

3.5.3.9 Global and National Water and Food: This is one of the 5 major components of the CGIAR Water and Food Challenge Programme (CP). EPTD has been leading this component since late 2002. The four key research areas addressed under this component are: (1) globalization, trade, macroeconomic, and sectoral policies; (2) incentives, investments and financing of agricultural water development and water supply; (3) transboundary water policy and institutions; and (4) adapting to Changes in the global water cycle. While specific research projects have been developed, workshops and conferences have also been held with specific objectives of research priority setting and organization of the project portfolio.

3.5.4 Accomplishments

Between 1998 and 2004, EPTD produced over 160 peer-reviewed journal articles, 10 books (some are edited), more than 70 book chapters and 80 discussions papers in addition to other publications, e.g., briefs and non-peer-reviewed papers.

The work of the Division has also contributed significantly to the Centre's 2020 vision initiative and major conferences and policy forums, and served significantly to improve the Institute's reputation. For example, the global projects on food, agriculture, and the environment provided the foundation for the World Food Prize awarded to the IFPRI DG in 2001 and for the AAEA Distinguished Policy Contribution to Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Rajul Pandya-Lorch, and Mark Rosegrant. The CAPRi work won the CGIAR's Excellence in Science Award in 2002 for Outstanding Partnership. At the same time, they have also participated in other global events such as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

EPTD's research activities spread widely both geographically and institutionally. For example, the CAPRi project alone under the Property Rights and Collective Action portfolio covers 15 CGIAR centres and more than 300 other organizations. The long-standing research portfolio on Sustainable Development of Less-favoured Lands covers

geographical area of Central American hillsides, the East Africa Highlands, and the dryland areas of West Asia and North Africa. The Water Resource Allocations, Productivity and Environmental Impact projects have been focusing on global, regional/basin level (Maipo River Basin in Chile and Mekong River Basin), country level (Latin America and the Caribbean, Vietnam and Indonesia) as well as local and community levels (India, Sri Lanka and Nepal).

In terms of methodologies applied by EPTD, they consist of modelling and simulation, econometric analysis, as well as other types of approaches, such as spatial analysis and focus group discussion. Multidisciplinary research is well integrated. To achieve maximum effect the Division delivers and shares its rigorous research results with the research community through publications, workshops and conferences. It also engages in policy dialogues at both local and high levels.

EPTD researchers have also actively participated in degree and non-degree training. For example, the GRP5 researchers have served as advisors and/or reviewers for 45 graduate students, almost all from developing countries mostly Africa. At the same time, they have delivered more than 50 guest lectures and sections of course work in universities in both developed and developing countries.

3.5.5 Assessment

EPTD's relatively long standing in the areas of property rights, sustainable development of less-favoured areas and water resource allocation research has provided the Division with opportunities for establishing itself as a leader within research communities and having influence in policy making circles within developing countries. The Panel commends EPTD for its outstanding work in these areas. For example, over the years, the policy research under *GRP5* has contributed significantly to the development policy debates in countries such as Ethiopia and Uganda. With respect to water and property rights in CAPRI, the Panel agrees with the assessment of the CCER that through a combination of review papers, workshops and new empirical research, the programme has helped to illustrate how institutions of collective action and property rights affect the adoption of agricultural technologies and natural resource management practices.

Having the IMPACT model as a well-developed research and analytical tool has also made it possible for EPTD to collaborate widely within and outside IFPRI on various policy analysis and commodity and resource use projections. IMPACT model projections of global food, agriculture and environment have provided foundations for the Centre's 2020 Initiative which are widely recognized as effective means of increasing public awareness and enabling IFPRI to dialogue with both developed and developing countries at agricultural and food policy levels.

However, two basic questions arise. The first is with respect to how very long-term projections can be credible. EPTD's work in extending the projection period from 2020/25 to 2100 (or even to 2050) leads, in the view of the Panel, to results of a dubious

nature, and little utility. The second question concerns the extent to which the model be expanded. One needs to bear in mind that the more complicated the model gets, the more assumptions need to be made, and the more likely it is to be relevant to the real world. EPTD plans to further develop and further complicate the IMPACT model in order to be able to address new topics in food security and agricultural policies in developing countries. The Panel cautions against depending too much on a single model to address all the issues related to natural resource management, poverty alleviation and sustainable agricultural and rural development. One other aspect of the IMPACT model work is related to its contribution as an international public good. Given the enormous efforts in data collection, model construction and refinements, the Panel believes that the structural equations of the model should be made more transparent and available to the general research public. It is understood that plans exist to develop a web version of the model. This should be given high priority.

The work in the area of biodiversity and biotechnology policy has enabled the Centre to gain significant recognition in the research community. At the same time, it also provides a foundation for the Centre, in collaboration with other centres like IGPRI to actively participate in international dialogues, such as the policy debate over the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and in providing critical input for the formulation of the Global Crop Diversity Trust. The new programme for biosafety systems (inherited from former ISNAR) will further enhance the Centre's capacity to participate in such high-level policy debate. The Panel considers the work in these areas to be highly relevant and of good quality.

New opportunities as well as new challenges emerge with EPTD's expanded project portfolio. The Division's increased interest in gender aspects of its research work will bring in new openings. The work on spatial analysis and the newly integrated research on biosafety and intellectual property rights will bring added value to its existing work. In the absence of more detailed information, the Panel is not in a position to recommend priorities. However, bearing in mind the other parts of the research agenda, such as global climate change, human demographics, health and diseases, soil fertility, and water pollution, and the resources of the Division, the Panel believes a priority-setting effort should be undertaken to identify the areas in which EPTD has a clear comparative advantage.

Leading a major component of the Water and Food CP (Theme 5) provides new opportunities for EPTD to establish wider collaboration with other centres as well as other partners. While activity is clear in terms of IFPRI's coordination and collaboration, e.g., priority setting workshops, advisory committee meetings, the Panel found little research activity underway and little output as yet from the project

EPTD has published widely both internally (research reports/food policy reviews and etc.) and externally in peer-reviewed journals. A fairly high proportion of peer-reviewed articles (about 25%) by EPTD researchers is published in high standard journals in agriculture and development areas. It is true that the researchers also publish reasonably in regional journals. With an average of 1.7 peer-reviewed journal articles per

research staff per year during 1998 and 2004, the Division has the highest publication record in the institute. Publications other than peer-reviewed journal articles provide useful information not only to research communities, but also to policy makers and the general public.

EPTD's research, capacity strengthening and outreach activities have demonstrated its commitments to reaching its goals and objectives. Expanding its focus beyond policy and management issues of water scarcity to water quality issues—including looking at environmental issues and livelihood consequences of intersectoral water transfers, is, in the Panel's opinion, an appropriate evolution of its work, and in line with the recommendation of 3rd EPMR.

3.6 International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) Division

3.6.1 Background

As a result of the 4th External Programme and Management Review (EPMR) of ISNAR a Restructuring Team (IRT) was set up by the CGIAR. Its analysis and recommendations were conditioned by a set of premises that (a) were provided to the IRT by the CGIAR; (b) were contained in the 4th (EPMR), as endorsed by the CGIAR; (c) emerged from the consultations conducted by the IRT or (d) were endorsed by consensus by the IRT. The IRT made a number of recommendations, the highlights of which are as follows:

- *Programme*: a restructured ISNAR Programme is built on two major themes (a) a primary theme to produce new knowledge, with strong international public good characteristics, which contributes to *institutional change* for enhancing the impact of agricultural research, and (b) a secondary theme to enhance the performance of agricultural research institutions through attention to their *organization and management*, with a particular focus on Sub-Saharan Africa.
- *Governance*: (a) ISNAR should not remain as a free standing CGIAR centre; and (b) Governance of a restructured ISNAR Programme should be undertaken through an alliance with an existing CGIAR centre (IFPRI) (c) the IFPRI Board should be assisted in this task by a high level special Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) for ISNAR.
- *Location*: The ISNAR Programme should be conducted in a decentralized manner; and, a Headquarters and directorate should be established in Sub-Saharan Africa, either in Addis Ababa or Pretoria.

At the 2003 Annual General Meeting of the CGIAR, the CG membership requested the Boards of ISNAR and IFPRI to carry out the transfer of governance and relocation of ISNAR's programmes to IFPRI. Consequently, at its meeting held November 24–28, 2003, the ISNAR Board of Trustees adopted a resolution to dissolve itself and ISNAR operations therefore ceased to exist on March 31, 2004. Seven ISNAR

internationally recruited research staff members were hired by IFPRI to continue to work on selected ISNAR projects in Costa Rica and in Washington, DC and to build the new ISNAR Programme on the ILRI campus in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in operation since April 1, 2004. An ISNAR/IFPRI transition team assisted in the administrative and programmatic closure of ISNAR up to March 31. The transition team was succeeded by the PAC, which became the advisory body to the ISNAR Programme on April 1, 2004. A permanent Director took up office in August, 2004.

3.6.2 Goal and Objectives

The Strategy and programmes of the new IFPRI-ISNAR Division are still under development. The Division has a mandate to bring about change in agricultural innovation systems so as to increase the contribution of research to agricultural development for the poor. The Division seeks to foster policy, institutional and organizational innovation and enhance the impact of such innovations on poverty reduction, agricultural development and economic growth.

The objective is to determine the best feasible relations among various actors, strengthen their performance by providing new policies on science and technology, institutional change in innovation system and capacity strengthening in the organization and management of agricultural research and extension.

3.6.3 Activities

Most of the activities of the Division are focused on developing its strategy and programmes which are to be based mainly in IFPRI's Ethiopia Office, and are expected to be in four areas:

Institutional Change in Agricultural Innovation Systems: This research will focus on institutional change for enhancing the impact of agriculture and food related science and knowledge systems in low-income countries. . Under this theme the Division expects to address policy issues with regard to how innovation systems can bring together different actors including global and regional research networks, national R&D institutions, private business, and civil society groups and how innovation can be brought about within food and agricultural commodity value chains. The programme's research and services to national research systems will relate to all critical elements of the food chain (from natural resources to farm production and to food processing).

Agricultural Science and Technology Policy: The programme will examine goals and instruments of agricultural science and technology policy and the factors in the underlying socioeconomic and political environments that inhibit or enhance the performance of agricultural science and technology. The programme will endeavour to formulate policies that can foster improved effectiveness under the complex institutional realities of developing countries. The Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) activity, formerly a joint effort of IFPRI and ISNAR, is part of this programme.

Other divisions of IFPRI, particularly the Environment and Production Technology Division (EPTD) are expected to work closely with the ISNAR Division on this project.

Organization and Management for Agricultural Research: Complementing the IFPRI policy emphasis, the ISNAR Division will focus on ways to strengthen organization and management systems of public R&D organizations and other actors in the agricultural innovation system, and to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their human and institutional capacity. It is expected that the research theme will provide appropriate tools to managers and decision makers at various levels of the innovation process in order to improve strategic planning, priority-setting, management, financing, execution, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

Capacity Strengthening: This programme pools all IFPRI capacity strengthening activities. Through this programme, IFPRI shares its research findings and strengthens the capacity of individuals and institutions in the agricultural innovation system. The programme brings together IFPRI researchers and other collaborators to carry out learning events and distance education programmes, to design and produce publicly accessible learning modules, and to develop informational networks that support higher education institutions and other actors in the agricultural innovation system.

Other programmes initiated by ISNAR are now part of other IFPRI Divisions – the *Programme for Biosafety Systems (PBS)* in the EPTD, and the *Regional Network on HIV/AIDS, Rural Livelihoods and Food Security (RENEWAL)* in the FNCD.

3.6.4 Accomplishments

Strategy development: Over the last six months under the guidance of the PAC, there has been much in-house discussion within the ISNAR Division itself and at the SMT level. A high-level brainstorming workshop was held in January 2004 to discuss the frontiers of research related to the ISNAR programme. In conjunction with the July 2004 PAC meeting in Ethiopia, IFPRI held meetings with representatives of the regional agricultural research organizations from Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Regional needs assessments and stakeholder consultations are planned, culminating in the production of a draft strategy by June, 2005. Regional needs assessments and stakeholder consultations are planned, culminating in the production of a draft strategy by June 2005.

Capacity strengthening: Two learning events have taken place. Plans for revision of training modules, as recommended by the 4th EPMR of ISNAR, have been prepared, and moves to devolve training to regional institutions have commenced with steps to develop a pilot programme at the Alemaya University in Ethiopia. Initial contacts have been established with Universities in East Africa for the development of a Masters programme in research management. According to IFPRI, the Division is managing the CGIAR-wide effort to establish a Global Open Agriculture and Food University (GOAFU), a CGIAR initiative for open distance learning and capacity strengthening that serves traditional and open universities in developing and developed countries, at the request of the Centre Directors Committee and endorsed by the Science Council of the

CGIAR. The university's goal is to strengthen the capacity of postgraduate students, researchers, and other working professionals in food and agriculture (including livestock, forestry, and fisheries) in order to enhance agricultural development, poverty reduction, and food security.

3.6.5 Assessment

IFPRI has moved quickly and efficiently to address the CGIAR-assigned tasks upon the transfer of the ISNAR mandate. The PAC established by its Board of Trustees has provided adequate oversight of the emerging programme. Staff recruitment is proceeding at a satisfactory pace and strategic planning activities, involve important stakeholder consultations including developed and developing country specialists. The new ISNAR team appears to be taking almost a clean slate approach to design of its new programme, with the objective of producing a work plan that ensures the shortcomings of the old ISNAR programme are corrected.

However, the Panel would like to strike a note of caution regarding the dangers of mission creep, duplication of efforts between the Division and other IFPRI programmes, and an excessively speculative research agenda. As indicated earlier, when the ISNAR programme was transferred to IFPRI, the ISNAR Restructuring Team recommended that given the existence of alternative suppliers (including other IFPRI Divisions, universities and advanced research institutes) research on research policy should not be included in a new ISNAR programme and that the restructured ISNAR programme should be built on two major themes: institutional change and organization and management.

IFPRI management has since decided that the Division should cover a wider scope with not only research on research policy included in its mandate, but also all capacity strengthening activities. The Panel appreciates that combining some activities may bring economies of scale into IFPRI's research portfolio. However, from presentations of the emerging agenda to the Panel by ISNAR staff, the Panel felt that IFPRI was launching a wide-ranging and ambitious programme with some danger of overlap, and moving into areas that the Division may not have a comparative advantage.

The emerging ISNAR programme appears to be wide ranging and speculative, and perhaps more than could be executed with the expected resources of the Division. The Panel was pleased to receive assurance that the programme that will emerge at the end of the strategy development process in July, 2005 would be lean and focused.

The Panel recommends that a Centre Commissioned External Review of the ISNAR Division should be carried out within two years to review its strategy and progress in implementing it.

There appears to be continuing strong demand for ISNAR's training materials and the Panel commends the Division for steps taken so far to revise the training modules and devolve training events to regional partners. In this process, ISNAR needs to pay attention to sustainability of the devolved programmes, an issue often given insufficient

attention during such moves. The question arises as to how the proposed Alemaya University programme will be sustained after the first three years, given IFPRI's philosophy of providing such training free to participants.

There are ongoing concerns about the comparative advantage of the CGIAR in setting up of the Open University. These were clearly expressed to the Panel by Stakeholders, including other CGIAR Centres. While acknowledging that the Open University would provide IFPRI with an additional avenue for disseminating its research output and training materials, the Panel is concerned that the Institute has no particular comparative advantage in managing the project.

The Panel recommends that IFPRI carefully assess what value involvement in the Global Open Agriculture and Food University adds to its programmes.

3.7 Communications Division

3.7.1 Introduction

The Communications Division currently has five units: Editorial Services, Publication Services, Media Relations and Internal Communications, Knowledge and Information Sharing - the Library, and the Policy Seminars Programme. Up to December 2004 it also had a sixth unit - the Training for Capacity-Strengthening Programme, which has been transferred to the ISNAR Division and is reviewed under that Division.

3.7.2 Goal and Objectives

Through its communications work, IFPRI seeks to increase the impact of its research by using appropriate means to engage key stakeholders in a continuous dialogue that leads to sustainable solutions to the pressing problems of hunger and poverty.

Strategic goals have been adopted for each of the Division's units, including helping researchers find appropriate forms for communicating their research results; developing and preparing communication materials in a form that suits the needs of respective stakeholder groups, attracts their attention, and supports IFPRI's dialogue with them; creating and strengthening relationships and dialogue with high-profile journalists to assure continual coverage of IFPRI research in developing and developed countries; providing leadership in institutional knowledge and information sharing by developing systems for information handling, access, conservation, and dissemination; and fostering dialogue with key stakeholder groups through their participation in events on cutting-edge issues or methodologies.

3.7.3 Activities

The Communications Division carries out the work of communicating with IFPRI's audiences in close cooperation with the research and outreach divisions and the

2020 Vision Initiative. It serves the entire institute by ensuring that research results get to those who need them.

The Editorial Services Unit manages the editing of all IFPRI publications; writes articles and other text; oversees production of external books; collaborates with the Publications Review Committee; produces translations and contributes marketing plans. The Publications Services Unit manages production of IFPRI's publications including design, printing, and dissemination of IFPRI products; collaborates with research divisions on presentation materials and coordinates conference displays. The Library manages and organizes information relevant to IFPRI research; facilitates access to information for IFPRI staff and collaborators and disseminates relevant material using electronic interactive media. The Policy Seminars Unit organizes and manages seminars, workshops, and conferences in collaboration with IFPRI research staff. Media Relations and Internal Communications promote coverage of IFPRI, its research, and issues in the media, and coordinates communications efforts with the research and outreach divisions.

The Division outsources some of its tasks including some design, translation, editing, mass mailings and organization of large conferences. Quality control is affected using resources inside and outside IFPRI.

3.7.4 Accomplishments

IFPRI has an institutional website *www.ifpri.org* hosted at CGNET. The Institute has also developed and maintains other sites including those for the CGIAR system-wide programme on CAPRI, Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI), HarvestPlus CP, and Theme 5 of the Water and Food CP.

IFPRI considers its website as a major knowledge asset. The content is developed by the Communications Division in collaboration with the research division staff. The site underwent a major revamping in 2001, which incorporated user feedback on ways to find information. Also, the most recent publications, news, and other announcements were moved up in the web structure so they are displayed more prominently. A place for Media was established which is now considered a main portal for external media to collect stories from IFPRI. Training, Library and Publications pages are usually in the top ten directories. In 2004, additional changes were implemented, including the production of HTML pages from existing databases across the institution and the removal of frames to make downloading easier.

The IFPRI website provides space for each of the research divisions and the 2020 Vision initiative to describe their scope and deliver their outputs. It also provides support to IFPRI conferences and workshops - during the past five years more than seven conference spaces were developed. The website is monitored daily. There were 150,000 to 300,000 downloads of IFPRI publications per month in 2004, an increase from the numbers in 2003 of 28% for PDF and 20% for HTML downloads.

The Library started the production of thematic CD-ROMs in 2002. More than 20 CDs on different topics have been produced and 10 more are under production. The Library serves as the curator for the institutional memory. All the information produced by the Centre is collected, indexed, stored and maintained in the library databases. These databases are shared through the Intranet and the Internet with IFPRI staff and partners. Records were upgraded to InMagic, an integrated web-based library system in 2000, making over 9000 records available on staff desktop computers. A photo library was created in 2004 with over 200 IFPRI photos. The IFPRI Library has made arrangements with the following international databases to allow them to harvest IFPRI publications records from its databases: REPEC, AgEcon (University of Minnesota), CiteSeer, and AGRIS (FAO). Over 1,500 IFPRI publications are ordered per month with over half from Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Division has succeeded in publicizing the activities of the Institute in high profile electronic and print media.

3.7.5 Assessment

The Panel believes that the acclaim received by the Communications programme of IFPRI for its professionalism and effectiveness is justified. The Media portal has enabled the media to have easy access to its materials and output – an uncommon feature among CG institutes. It has worked very well with the 2020 Vision initiative to organize the high level policy dialogue and effectively use the opportunity for publicity provided by such events as the 2020 Bonn and Africa Conferences. IFPRI staff are apparently satisfied with the Communications services. The website seems to be very popular with stakeholders, and receives almost twice as many visitors as the websites of other CGIAR Centres and the CG Secretariat. The Panel commends the Centre for its effective Communications programme.

3.8 Director General's Office (DGO)

3.8.1 2020 Vision

3.8.1.1 Goals and Objectives

The 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment was launched in 1993 in collaboration with partners around the world. It is housed in the Director General's Office (DGO). It contributes particularly to IFPRI's first strategy research theme (Global food situation and scenarios of policy and opportunities).

The 2020 Initiative has two primary objectives: (i) to develop and promote a shared vision and consensus for action for meeting food needs while reducing poverty and protecting the environment; and (ii) to generate policy-relevant information to raise public awareness, enhance dialogue and debate, and influence action by national governments, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, international development institutions, and other elements of civil society.

3.8.1.2 Activities

- To realize its objectives, the 2020 Initiative engages in four major activities:
- Generating timely information on key topics related to food, agriculture, and the environment, paying special attention to emerging issues and long-term projections and scenarios;
 - Communicating the 2020 Vision challenges and related action programme to raise public awareness of the world's food and environmental problems and what can be done to solve them, paying special attention to reaching not only the current generation of policymakers, researchers, educationists, and other leaders, but also the next generation(s);
 - Providing forums for multi-stakeholder dialogue, debate, information sharing, and consensus building among policymakers, researchers, and leaders in nongovernmental organizations, private sector, and media through seminars, workshops, and conferences; and
 - Undertaking pilot activities in research, policy communications, and capacity strengthening to support IFPRI's long-term strategy.

3.8.1.3 Accomplishments

Major achievements since 1998 include:

- Periodic updates and extension of the global food projections model –IMPACT- (at least every two years) with key results published and presented;
- Analysis on key emerging or contentious issues with results reported in 2-4 substantive publications per year;
- About 1-2 panel discussions or policy forums held each year on emerging issues;
- A high level global conference on “Sustainable Food Security for All by 2020” held in Bonn, Germany, in September 2001, and an Africa Conference on “Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa by 2020” held in Kampala, Uganda in April 2004;
- Publication and dissemination of books, discussion papers, policy briefs and newsletters to effectively communicate timely issues to policymakers and other stakeholders, and high-level policy dialogues;
- Capacity building activities centred on 2 regional research networks in West Africa (1998-2000) and East Africa (1998-2004), and the launching of a Collaborative Masters Programme in Agricultural and Applied Economics in East, Central and Southern Africa (2002-present);
- Receipt of a number of awards, including significant contribution to the winning of the World Food Prize by Per Pinstrup-Andersen, the previous DG of IFPRI.

3.8.1.4 Assessment

The 2020 Vision initiative has been a high-profile research and advocacy activity of IFPRI during the last decade. It has received massive donor support and must be credited as one of the major initiatives that have buttressed the case for agriculture led economic development of poor countries, and contributed to putting agriculture back on the portfolio of donor agencies. High-level advocacy for agricultural development has been based on solid research, mainly from IFPRI work, but also including relevant research by other agencies. Through its high-level policy dialogue, IFPRI has contributed

significantly to raising the profile of agriculture among policy makers, particularly in Africa, although this has yet to have any demonstrable effect on investment levels.

The initiative has been a major stimulant for the development and refinement of the global food projections (IMPACT) model which has successfully drawn attention to the need for increased investments in agriculture if poverty is to be significantly reduced by 2020, and to the bleak future for food and nutrition, if current trends continue.

The initial attempts at capacity strengthening in Africa through the sponsoring of networks were a duplication of existing efforts by the regional organizations CORAF and ASARECA, probably driven by the availability of donor funding (the West Africa network collapsed after two years because it did not receive donor funding!). Despite significant supervisory efforts by IFPRI, the output of network grants was in the majority of cases judged not to be high enough to meet IFPRI publication standards. Effort should have been directed instead to increased collaboration and strengthening of the regional networks. The more recent collaboration in launching the regional Masters Degree programme is commendable.

Unlike other time-specific and project-specific work at IFPRI, the work plan and agenda of the 2020 Initiative has not always been set from year to year. This is because it is mainly demand-driven, i.e., it responds to demand from the public and its stakeholders in terms of the emerging issues that are dominating the food, agriculture, and environment agenda. Overall the 2020 Vision initiative has responded successfully to the demands. The Panel commends the Institute for the foresight and energy as well as the professionalism with which it has carried out its activities over the years.

In recent years, the 2020 Initiative has disengaged from some activities initiated and carried out in collaboration with the Research Divisions (e.g., capacity building to ISNAR, regional networks to DSG). It would appear that future activities would continue to be demand-driven with the Initiative serving as an incubator for new activities in research, policy communication, and/or capacity strengthening until they are at a stage when they can be appropriately managed by the Divisions. The Panel doubts that this is a cost-effective and efficient way to nurture new activities, and suggests that such nurturing would be best carried out within the research divisions, which are already engaged in such exploratory research as indicated in the Institute's MTP. Necessary support could be solicited from the other Divisions for activities that are cross-cutting in nature.

3.8.2 Impact Assessment

3.8.2.1 Goals and Objectives

IFPRI's pamphlet "Impact Evaluation" (2002) gives the rationale for a focus on impact assessment as "the need for greater accountability of research institutions". Social science and policy research are identified as being particularly difficult to assess, yet it is important to provide evidence that spending on such research generates returns to investors that justify the costs. IFPRI's impact assessment programme attempts to

establish methods to conduct such assessment, and apply the methods to obtain evidence of research impacts.

3.8.2.2 Activities

IFPRI for many years has been a contributor to assessment of research at CGIAR Centres and NARS, notably in estimating rates of return to investment in developing improved crop varieties. IFPRI researchers, in conjunction with social scientists at other CGIAR Centres, have continued to refine and evaluate estimates of rates of return not only to new crop varieties, but also to improved management systems and other innovations in agriculture. IFPRI publications have also been important in documenting and disseminating estimated impacts of agricultural research in general as well as research in the CGIAR.

During the 1998-2004 period, IFPRI's impact assessment work has focused on the returns to policy research, and particularly the impact of its own products and services. Since 1997, there has been a well-defined programme in this area, directed by an Impact Coordinator in the DGO. The prospects for using methods of impact assessment for policy research that are analogous to the quantitative studies of crop varietal research were explored, but "ultimately, IFPRI did not pursue the more global quantitative approach that sought to establish rates of return on agricultural policy research. Rather, IFPRI undertook a series of case studies, beginning in 1998, which examined the policy process and the use of research information by policymakers... primarily at the project level"¹⁴. In addition, in 2002 the DGO initiated a series of interviews with IFPRI senior researchers "with the objective of assembling information related to outcomes and influence of IFPRI's research on policy decision-making" ("Institutionalizing Impact Assessment at IFPRI," Progress Report, December 2003).

3.8.2.3 Accomplishments

With respect to estimating returns to agricultural research, publications by IFPRI authors and researchers in other Centres working with IFPRI remain standard references, and are widely cited by the CGIAR and NARS in their lobbying of governments and other donors for the maintenance and expansion of agricultural research funding. IFPRI staff have continued to make innovations in this line of research, a notable example being the attempts to measure the impact of agricultural research on poverty.

With respect to returns to policy research, IFPRI convened and provided intellectual leadership for two conferences (The Hague, Nov 2001, Washington, D.C. November 2004) on issues in impact assessment, published a book derived from an earlier (1997) conference, and published more than 20 papers on various aspects of impact assessment. IFPRI created a policy impact assessment website on which 21 peer-reviewed Impact Assessment Papers are posted, as well as others which appeared as working papers in IFPRI divisions. Among the topics covered in the Impact Assessment Papers are IFPRI's research on rice policy in Vietnam, policy research and capacity building in Malawi, the 2020 Vision initiative, IFPRI's food subsidy research, IFPRI's

¹⁴ James G. Ryan and James L. Garrett, "The Impact of Economic Policy Research," Impact Assessment Discussion Paper 20, DGO, IFPRI, November 2003, p. 16.

work on food security in Bangladesh, the “IMPACT” framework, property rights in the Mashreq and Maghreb, and IFPRI’s economy-wide modelling. These appeared between 1999 and 2004. In 1999, IFPRI produced a layperson’s pamphlet on a series of case studies that paints a quite positive picture of IFPRI’s impact (“Research that Matters: The Impact of IFPRI’s Policy Research”). These efforts together with the narrative project¹⁵ provided means to accumulate and assess evidence of impact when the results of policy research do not go so far as to achieve demonstrable change in food policies. However, the results do influence policy and lay the groundwork for future policy in a country through provision of research findings, analysis of policy alternative, or capacity strengthening in policy analysis in either government agencies or private sector institutions.

3.8.2.4 Assessment

IFPRI’s work on rates of return to agricultural research has had a significant impact in the view of peers. IFPRI did not originate the analytical methods but, together with social scientists in other CGIAR Centres and outside the system as IFPRI’s co-authors, IFPRI’s work ratified and added new evidence to the conclusion that CGIAR research creating new crop varieties, and other related innovations in agricultural production technology, had returns far greater than the costs of the underlying research. The findings of extraordinarily high rates of return to public funds invested in agricultural research have held up well. These findings have contributed to a well-established state of knowledge in which it is difficult for any government or other financial supporter of agricultural research to argue for reduced spending on research. The findings foster confidence that new initiatives in agricultural research are likely to pay off too.

IFPRI’s contributions to developing methods of impact assessment suitable for policy research are on the frontiers of this subject, and have taken important steps in making such assessment implementable. IFPRI’s impact assessments of its own work have been pathbreaking as the most sustained efforts of their kind to be undertaken. They provide a foundation upon which future evaluations of policy research can build, and which future evaluators will ignore at their peril. Overall, impact assessment is a thoroughly commendable component of IFPRI’s research programme.

Beyond their value as test vehicles for impact assessment methods, IFPRI’s assessments of its own impact are less definitive. The findings in IFPRI’s assessment of its own impact are predominantly positive but the evidence adduced in the Impact Assessment papers is typically quite thin. The most convincing success story is perhaps Vietnam’s rice policy, which was actually reformed in a manner coinciding with IFPRI’s advice. It is to IFPRI’s credit that the papers are circumspect in their claims, but nonetheless even modestly positive findings from IFPRI’s own self-assessment work carry less weight than a fully independent and external assessment would do. One chief lesson, which IFPRI’s impact assessment leaders knew from the beginning, and had no way of overcoming, is the truly daunting difficulty of establishing counterfactuals in order to nail down the impacts of policy research. In this situation one has to turn to

¹⁵ Marc Cohen and Maria Soledad Bos, “Institutionalizing Impact Assessment at IFPRI: Retrospective Narratives of Outcomes, Influence and Impact” Progress Report – December 2003.

indirect indicators of impact, indicators that IFPRI's findings are being taken seriously by the policy analysis community, both in government and in non-governmental institutions. Unfortunately, one cannot find out about this from citation counts, or website downloads or tons of paper distributed. In the end it is the reports from clients that IFPRI's work has been taken seriously that is most convincing about IFPRI's impact. This is well documented in the cases of Vietnam and Pakistan, and is informally confirmed in others.

3.8.3 HarvestPlus

3.8.3.1 Introduction

This Challenge Programme was launched in 2003 and has hence only been in operation for about a year and a half, but it builds on earlier more small-scale activities conducted by IFPRI, CGIAR centres and other collaborators. The programme is managed jointly by IFPRI and CIAT. IFPRI's main responsibilities are: (1) overall management and coordination; (2) coordination and synthesis of impact and policy analyses (e.g., benefit-cost assessments); (3) centre of communication between the many partners and other stakeholders; and (4) coordination of research in food science and nutrition (e.g., assess the efficacy of biofortified crops to enhance the micronutrient status of undernourished populations).

3.8.3.2 Objectives and goals

The overall aim with HarvestPlus is to use both traditional and transgenic methods for biofortification of six main staple crops with micro-nutrients (rice, wheat, corn, beans, cassava and sweet potatoes). The micro-nutrients in focus are iron, zinc and Vitamin A. The details of the scope and logframe of the various parts and phases of the programme are clearly laid out in the MTP for 2005-2007.

3.8.3.3 Accomplishments

So far the most tangible work has been done in the first phase of the programme, i.e., the breeding of new varieties of the selected crops. The breeding has resulted in new varieties with significantly higher densities of iron, zinc and Vitamin A. Some recent results were presented at a Workshop, *HarvestPlus China*, in Beijing in November, 2004, which one of the Panel members attended. The subsequent steps to test also the bioavailability of the additional nutrients in the new varieties, assess their agronomic properties (e.g. yields, water dependence, pest resistance, etc), and gauge their acceptance by the consumers, have yet to be evaluated. When it comes to bioavailability, limited evidence is already available, though.

3.8.3.4 Assessment

The programme is ambitious and potentially important for alleviating some of the most severe micro-nutrient deficiencies that affect 2-3 billion people in developing countries. At a preliminary stage, there are reasons to be optimistic about future results. First, the funding has been generous. Funds have been provided by eight donors with the World Bank and the Gates Foundation accounting for the bulk of the funding, amounting for some \$54 million for the years up to 2007, or about \$15 million per year in 2005-07. Second, some 130 "partners" from all over the world, including nine of the 15 CGIAR

institutions, have been engaged in the programme. The fact that so many donors and participants have viewed this CP positively is a strong indicator of its potential.

The Panel has not come across any serious criticism of the programme, but notes that UNICEF and WHO are not among the contributors, although they were collaborators in the earlier Micronutrient Programme. UNICEF has recently published a progress report on mineral and vitamin deficiencies. IFPRI should examine whether there are any significant differences in UNICEF and WHO's perception of the value of biofortification as compared to other methods for improving the micro-nutrient contents of the diet consumed by the poor. It is notable that the MTP 2005-2007 does not contain such a comparative assessment, and no *ex ante* estimations of the economic costs and potential benefits of biofortification. The Panel has been assured that evaluation methods and data collection is underway and that results will be available by mid 2005.

In Beijing, the Programme Director presented some figures which suggest that the potential net benefits are huge, but more details are warranted. The main economic advantage with biofortification that he highlighted is that most costs are once-and-for-all. This means that when a new variety of a crop with high density of bioavailable micro-nutrients has been developed and accepted by consumers, costs are sunk and benefits accrue year after year. The main alternatives, notably postharvest fortification and supplementation, carry recurrent costs. This is not, however, enough to ensure a higher benefit cost-ratio for biofortification than for other programmes aimed at dietary improvements for poor populations.

On the down-side is the risk that a later phase (e.g., bioavailability, agronomic properties, consumer acceptance) could turn out to be more problematic and costly than anticipated at present. It is also worth noting that even successful development of the six phase-one crops is no panacea for alleviating micro-nutrient deficiencies in the world. In large parts of the developing world, the six crops are not the main staples and the development of the phase-two crops may prove more difficult and costly. Moreover, children below two years of age consume very little of the selected crops and may only benefit indirectly, through better maternal nutritional status. The micro-nutrient insufficiencies for this age cohort often lead to irreversible stunting, which then has to be resolved through other interventions.

Overall, the Panel finds that IFPRI's leadership of the HarvestPlus CP has been commendable and that the programme has great potential. However, a more detailed *ex ante* cost-benefit estimation is warranted (and underway). Complementarities and trade-offs with other methods for improving the micro-nutrient status of poor people, including diet diversification (e.g., more low-cost animal products), should be also analysed more explicitly than hitherto.

3.8.4 Donor Relations

This is an activity led by the DG, assisted by the Head of Donor Relations and an assistant. It operates organizationally within the DGO. IFPRI has a clear, documented

fund-raising strategy enunciated in 2002 and still valid. The strategy recognized the changes that have taken place in recent years – cut backs in countries’ donations due to financial stringency, a switch by some donors to targeted restricted funding – and the new opportunities available to seek funding from non-traditional sources, such as foundations and private sector organizations. In preparing the strategy IFPRI’s Vision – *to contribute to the reduction of hunger, malnutrition, and poverty* – has been the guiding philosophy. The strategy was approved by the Board.

Operationally, fund-raising is a decentralized process supported and coordinated through the DGO. Among the actions that followed the adoption of the strategy were:

- Improving the stewardship of the traditional donors i.e., the CGIAR members through targeted approaches including visits by the DG and senior staff;
- Enhancing relationships with non-CGIAR funding windows in development agencies and non-Overseas Development government agencies;
- Increasingly to cultivate the sources of non-traditional funding such as foundations and corporations;
- Involving the Board in facilitating fund-raising, through “opening doors” rather than expecting the Board to be fund-raiser;
- Improving the links between fund-raising and communication efforts by getting IFPRI’s message out in a form that is understandable to donors; and,
- Enhancing the internal administrative and information systems to cultivate donors and improve communication to staff

The overall goal is to maximize unrestricted funding to lower transaction costs and to maintain flexibility for programmatic research. Procedures and internal processes have also been streamlined to conduct this time-consuming activity efficiently. The DG works to a plan that requires him to visit some fifteen CGIAR members and other key international organizations annually, and meet sizable group of donors during the CG Annual General Meeting and make reports to principal donors. It is in the DGO that a database of some 100 potential donors is maintained and research is carried out to find the best matches for IFPRI’s products.

3.8.4.1 Achievements

- Has attracted substantial funds from non-traditional sources in 2003 notwithstanding that these were restricted (e.g., the Gates Foundation);
- Substantially increased restricted funds in the period 1998 to 2004; and,
- Integrated IFPRI efforts between the DG, Divisions and senior scientists through the database and on-line project/donor information system.

3.8.4.2 Assessment

IFPRI has produced an impressive record in fund-raising in the period 1998 to 2004 when total funding increased by 66% during a time of financial stringency worldwide. Fund-raising is being planned and managed systematically and professionally, although it can be seen that it requires a sizeable amount of time of the DG and many other staff. The Panel believes that having a record of the time spent by staff on fund-raising would be a useful tool for the management to assess cost-

effectiveness. Notwithstanding this observation, the Panel commends the DG and staff involved on the impressive results achieved.

CHAPTER 4 - GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

4.1 Governance

4.1.1 Background

The field of NGO governance has advanced over the last few years and particularly in the US, there is a trend towards newly stringent legal requirements for both business and NGO corporations. As IFPRI is incorporated as an international organization under US law and as a non-profit organization under District of Columbia law, these trends are relevant to its governance practices.

IFPRI's bylaws specify that there shall be not less than ten but no more than sixteen members on the Board of Trustees (Board), and that fifty percent of these shall be appointed by the CGIAR and one by the host government, in all cases in consultation with the Board. Other trustees are elected by a majority of the trustees then serving. Each trustee can serve a term of three years and then be eligible for re-election to a second three-year term but may serve for no more than six consecutive years. The DG is an *ex-officio* member of the Board with full voting powers. The Chairperson is elected annually from among the trustees to serve an initial term of one year, which may be extended by the Board for additional years until the end of the trustee's tenure.

In 1997, the CGIAR adopted "The Role, Responsibilities, and Accountability of Centre Boards of Trustees" that identifies ten responsibilities for Centre Boards, but provides neither specificity nor standards. As a result, an assessment of a Board must rely more on Board and staff satisfaction with the Board's performance and on the performance of the institute, rather than on the quality of that performance.

The Panel, assisted by a consultant, reviewed Board governance by: observing Board meetings, conducting interviews with the Board chair and members, conducting interviews with staff supporting the Board, reviewing Board and Board committee minutes, and interviewing the previous evaluator.

4.1.2 Review

4.1.2.1 Board composition

At the time of the review the Board had sixteen members including the DG. It is comprised of individuals with strong academic and research credentials in relevant fields of study, including economics, agriculture, international development, nutrition, and food security (Table 4.1). Board members and the DG report an intention to broaden the board by recruiting members with other types of expertise within economics, in policy implementation, and in trade.

Table 4.1 IFPRI Board of Trustees as of October - December 2004

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Discipline</u>	<u>Academic & Gov't Service</u>
Ahluwalia, Isher	India	2000-2006	Female	Economics	Professor, Think Tank Head, IMF Official
Ait-Kadi, Mohamed	Morocco	2002-2008	Male	Irrigation Engineering	Sr. Civil Servant, Professor
Atsain, Achi	Côte d'Ivoire	2002-2008	Male	Economics	Cabinet Minister, Professor, AFDB Official
Garnaut, Ross	Australia	2003-2006	Male	Economics	Professor, Former Ambassador, Corp. Director
Grynspan, Rebeca	Costa Rica	1998-2004	Female	Economics	Vice President, Cabinet Minister, Professor, UN Official
Honma, Masayoshi	Japan	2004-2007	Male	Ag Econ	Professor
Kinsey, Jean	USA	2004-2007	Female	Ag Econ	Professor, Federal Reserve Bank Board Chair
Kuyvenhoven, Arie	The Netherlands	1998-2004	Male	Development Economics	University Dean
López, Cecilia	Colombia	2004-2007	Female	Econ Demography	Minister, Univ. Dean, Foundation Pres.
Matsuoka, Susumu	Japan	1998-2004	Male	Economics	Sr. Civil Servant, Trade Assoc. Exec.
Ostry, Sylvia	Canada	2000-2006	Female	Economics	Deputy Minister, OECD Official, Professor
Rukuni, Mandivamba	Zimbabwe	2001-2007	Male	Ag Econ	Univ. Dean, Foundation Exec
Smitasiri, Suttalak	Thailand	2002-2008	Female	Nutrition	Head of Univ. Program
Sørbø, Gunnar	Norway	2004-2007	Male	Social Anthro	Professor, ThinkTank Head
Stewart, Frances	United Kingdom	2000-2006	Female	Development Economics	Professor
Tubiana, Laurence	France	2004-2007	Female	Econ & Poli Sci	Professor, Think Tank Head, Advisor to Prime Minister
Vazquez, Roberto	Uruguay	2000-2006	Male	Ag Econ	Professor, Parastatal Head, Member of Parliament, Minister
Von Braun, Joachim	Germany	2002-2007	Male	Ag Econ	Professor, Head of Univ. Program
Wen, Simei	China	2000-2006	Male	Ag Econ	Professor

Notes: This table includes members whose terms expired in October and the name of a members-elect who will join the Board for the next period. Thus, more than the 16 who were at the BoT meeting in October appear in the table.

The Board composition in October 2004 was as follows:

Geographic diversity

Asia 4 (25%); Africa 3 (19%); North America 2 (13%); Latin America 2 (13%); Europe 4 (25%); Pacific Rim 1 (6%)

Balance:

Developing countries 56%; Developed countries 44%

Gender:

Male 56%; Female 44%

Tenure:

five members in their 1st year; one member in 2nd year; three members in 3rd year; one member in 4th year; three members in 5th year; and three members in 6th year.

4.1.2.2 Board knowledge and preparedness to govern

The IFPRI board has Audit, Executive and Nominating Committees, and meets as a committee of the whole as the Programme Committee. Members report a high degree of confidence that they understand their roles, and are equipped with the professional expertise and information to fulfil their responsibilities. In particular, the Audit and the Executive Committee have a strong awareness of the importance of their work. The minutes show that at least in one instance this year, members initiated stronger financial oversight processes that would reinforce Board independence from staff, and put new practices into place over other suggestions by the DG.

4.1.2.3 Board familiarity with CGIAR guidelines

Members showed strong familiarity with CGIAR guidelines and practices. Many have served on the Boards of other CGIAR centres, or have worked with them on research or convening projects. Members have knowledge of and respect for relationship and demarcation between Board and Centre management's responsibilities. The Board, the DG and the Board leadership agree that members know and respect the mutual roles and responsibilities of Board and management and the Board's self-assessment showed strong satisfaction with its respect for Board-DG interaction.

4.1.2.4 Adequacy and timeliness of information made available prior to meetings

Interviews with Board members, committee chairs, IFPRI staff, and an external consultant, who worked with the Board Chair last year, reveal a consensus that trustees are well informed, engaged, and provide critical oversight and friendly advice to staff. A review of Board minutes supports this confidence.

4.1.2.5 Board practices

Practices were reviewed under the heads a) the relationship between the chair and other members of the Board, and between the Board and Centre management, b) appropriateness of the process for annual evaluation of the DG and the methodology used

for the review of the DG's remuneration, c) Board self-assessment, d) frequency and cost-effectiveness of Board meetings, e) succession planning, f) resource mobilization.

a) *Relationships*: Board members and senior staff members display a strong sense of collegiality, in part because many of them have worked together on various projects over the years. This collegiality and acquaintanceship helps IFPRI Board members feel comfortable with one another very quickly and move to working together and with staff with a sense of trust.

b) *Evaluation of the DG* is perhaps the single most important annual action the Board undertakes. In the Board's self assessment in 2003, roughly 55% of respondents to the question on the Board's evaluation of the DG were satisfied, while the other 45% were "not sure". The Board has generally assessed the DG's performance by the organization's overall performance, rather than against goals set specifically for the DG. While members were highly satisfied with their knowledge on programmes, only 45% of respondents were satisfied with the Board's consideration of the effectiveness of the Centre's management team and its organizational culture. In mid-2004, the DG proposed a new (self-assessment) process for evaluation of his performance, which is viewed as an exploratory process by the Board leadership which include set goals related to the institute's achievements. At the time of this EMPR, this new process had not been completed and as a result is not ready to be assessed. The Panel suggests that the following tools be taken into consideration when reviewing the outcome of the exploratory process:

- An annual multi-source (*360 degree*) assessment which would include, for example, interviews conducted by a Board team with senior staff, key donors and partners, current and former Board members
- Establish objectives which go beyond organizational performance
- Agree on the need for training in a specific field

c) *Board self-assessment*: The board conducted a written self-assessment by e-mail survey in 2003, with eleven (of fourteen) members responding. A summarized report of responses was made available to the Board. By far the most time in board meetings is spent—and where Board members are the most engaged—when the Board is acting as the Programme Committee in a committee of the whole. Even in these discussions, the Programme Committee discussions focus on "doing things right" rather than "doing the right things." This observation corresponds to the Board's self-assessment where one of the weakest areas was in its satisfaction with the Board's strategic planning processes. 22% were satisfied, 21% were not satisfied, and 56% were unsure.

d) *Frequency and cost-effectiveness of meetings*: The last EMPR suggested that IFPRI increase its number of regular Board meetings to two from one per year. Considerable discussion on the Board and with the senior staff led to a decision to keep the current practice of one meeting per year, with a second meeting to be called if necessary. The Board actually met twice in 1998, 2000, 2001 and 2004. Attendance at meetings has been consistently high, some 92%, since 1998.

e) *Succession planning* (nominating processes): The Nominating committee prepares profiles for candidates for Board succession. Members report being satisfied with the current informal process that follows (discussion among members) and hold the view that informal conversations about individuals are important ways in which candidates are prioritized.

f) *Resource mobilization*: The Board's self-assessment survey is somewhat contradictory. 66% of the respondents said they were satisfied that the Board understands IFPRI's resource mobilization strategy, but only one member (11%) was satisfied that Board members actively support that strategy. Board members, though, are active as ambassadors for IFPRI in the circles where they travel, but the staff has not found effective ways to involve them proactively in donor acquisition or cultivation.

4.1.3 Assessment

The IFPRI board demonstrates the qualifications, diversity and attention required for governance in a rapidly evolving organization. It has supported changes in the Institute, and shifted its own composition and agendas to support the "new IFPRI." IFPRI can celebrate the commitment of its Board members, and the friendly and mutually respectful relationships between members, the DG, and senior staff. At the same time, it should strengthen its independent ability to assess IFPRI's external impact and internal management, and be wary of the complacency that can arise in a well-managed and well-respected institution. The large number of new members suggests that the Board and the DG must invest time and effort in orientation of the new members and in effectively engaging their expertise and connections. In selecting successors the Board seems comfortable with the informal process (described earlier). Nonetheless, the Panel believes that by making the process more formal and more explicit, the nominations process could become more focused and more in alignment with the goals set for the Board.

For Board succession planning, some members report a mild tension for nominations characterized as one between "a Nobelist in economics" versus specialists in trade and policy implementation. While a balance must be found between concentration of field and diversity of field, the Panel suggests that the IFPRI board attend to its strength in economics and pursue economists with the rigor and prestige of Nobel Laureates. As for diversity, despite the lack of written guidelines the Panel agrees with the perceptions of the members that the Board has a good balance in gender and nationality diversity and should aim to maintain this diversity. For example, through a conscious effort the Board brought the gender balance of women on the Board, up from 31% in 1998 to 44% in 2004.

The Panel suggests that the Board's top-level oversight function be complemented by proactive inquiry into various financial matters, such as the use of financial information to investigate the perception of work overload, or a differentiated assessment between the financial health of the unrestricted fund and the financial health of total funds. The addition to the Board of a person with experience in institute finance (rather

than general management) would facilitate this kind of proactive approach. As IFPRI's financial matters become more complex, the Board needs to take a more proactive approach to financial oversight. While nearly all members have direct experience with budgets and many have held top positions in government and in research institutes, few if any bring expertise in NGO finance and business strategy. Adding members to the board who may not have the research and academic credentials of their peers would be a dramatic step for IFPRI. Nonetheless, at least one member with credentials and expertise in the financial strategies and management of non-profit research institutions would strengthen the board in this dimension. An alternative is to consider the use of a financial expert to assist the Board on financial oversight.

The Panel was surprised that only eleven members responded to the written self-assessment survey. Such a survey should be conducted annually and the Panel would expect all members to respond. Survey responses should be sent to a Board member who should also make the report to the Board.

4

The Panel recommends that the Board takes action in the following areas:

- **Include a discussion within the Board that probes its own effectiveness, particularly in research quality review, regional and overall strategy development;**
- **Use a planning process or other means to raise the Board's sight to a long-term vision, and to forestall complacency;**
- **Recruit at least one member with a strong financial background to lead more proactive financial oversight by the Board; and,**
- **Strengthen the structured evaluation process for the evaluation of the DG by adding multi-source assessment (*360 degree*) and objectives that go beyond organizational performance.**

4.2 Organization and Management

IFPRI's management, viewed through the lens of its organizational structure (Figure 4.1), is constituted along functional lines. It has remained the same structurally but broadened since the last EPMR from four programme Divisions and a Finance and Administration (F & A) Division into five programme Divisions, a Communications Division and the F & A Division. This is the result of a substantially enlarged portfolio of research activities and the absorption of the residual part of ISNAR into IFPRI, after its dissolution in 2004. The current organizational structure became operational in 2004. It consists of the seven Divisions, each headed by a Division Director (DD) reporting directly to the DG. Management is decentralized to the extent that the DG has delegated the management of each Division, including programme, finances and staffing, to DDs. They in turn delegate individual project management responsibility and authority to their unit heads and project leaders. Each Division has a conventional hierarchical structure of units and sub-units.

Management of the institute as a whole is exercised through a Senior Management Team (SMT) comprised of the DG and seven DDs, who deal with subjects of a collective nature common to the institute as a whole. In 2003 the SMT reviewed and updated its operating guidelines. It identified a hierarchy of five discrete levels for decision-making. These decision categories have been documented and are clear on roles, responsibilities and the type of decisions where the DG and the DDs have veto powers respectively. Briefly, the categories are:

- Decisions reserved to the DG who may consult the SMT at his discretion;
- Decisions reserved to the DG who typically seeks SMT advice;
- Decisions the DG brings to the SMT for decision-making, subject to his veto (expected to be rarely exercised);
- SMT majority decisions that the DG cannot veto;
- Division-specific decisions.

The SMT meets formally monthly, and weekly for information-sharing.

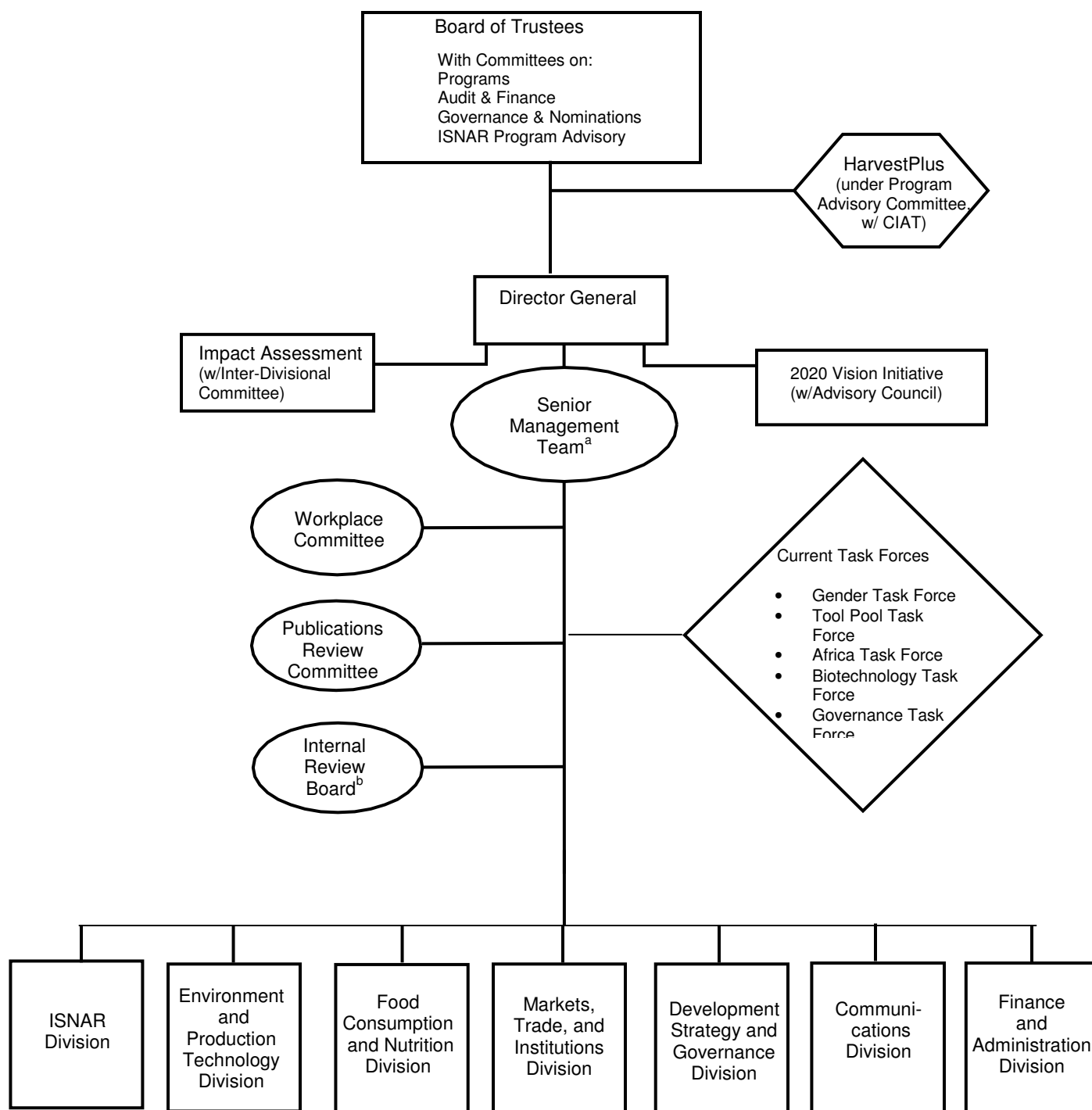
The organization is augmented by three formally constituted committees, and five task-forces which are time-limited. These committees and their mandates are, briefly:

- *The Workplace Committee*: a channel for collecting staff concerns and directing them to the appropriate unit for resolution; a sounding board for management
- *Publications Review Committee (PRC)*: consists of a representative from each research Division, chaired by a non-IFPRI individual, responsible for maintaining and enhancing the quality of IFPRI research products by overseeing the review process and recommending quality criteria for research publications
- *Institutional Review Board (IRB)*: constituted in 2003 and charged with setting up ethical guidelines and administrative procedures for ensuring compliance with mandatory regulations and/or best practice; composed of eight senior staff members and overseen by the SMT.

The organization also includes two working groups with four staff in each, reporting to the DG on Impact assessment and the 2020 Vision Initiative. The DG's office (DGO), not shown in Figure 4.1, has a complement of 13 staff including the head of Donor Relations. Unrestricted¹⁶ fund raising remains a function of the DGO while restricted¹⁷ fund-raising is delegated to DDs and their staff, although the DG supports and augments their efforts as necessary. The IFPRI co-led HarvestPlus CP has another group of staff reporting to a Programme Advisory Committee appointed by the IFPRI and CIAT Boards.

¹⁶ Funds that are not subject to donor-imposed stipulations

¹⁷ Funds subject to donor-imposed stipulations, both terms being CGIAR terminology



a'- Formed by 7 Division Directors and the Director General

b'- On Ethics and Research with Human Subjects

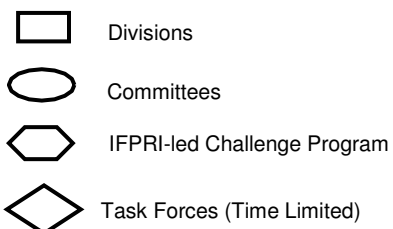


Figure 4.1 IFPRI's Organizational Structure

4.2.1 Activities and Accomplishments

- Success with fund-raising for restricted funds as evidenced by increased funding received each year
- A flexible think-tank approach to subjects relevant to IFPRI research and research quality, particularly through the standing committees and task-forces
- The spontaneous exchange of ideas encouraged through the informal *brown bag* luncheons, and seminars with invited speakers (providing another avenue for staff from across IFPRI to confer).

4.2.2 Assessment

The SMT management process, augmented by the committees and task-forces, provides a practical balance between a top-down and a participative approach to managing an organization.

While appreciating the advantages of a structure with inter-divisional work groups, committees, advisory groups and task-forces, in addition to periodic intra and inter-departmental meetings, the Panel noted several instances where the same individual(s) served on a multiplicity of these committees. The Panel is not able to assess how much this multiplicity of activities, additional to the research load and fund-raising activities, is a factor in the “time famine” concern raised by staff in the survey¹⁸ conducted by the Panel. (42% of the staff stated that they had insufficient time to do their work, 15% were neutral and only 16% stated that time to do their work was sufficient).

The previous EPMR had raised this concern, which was to have been addressed through an organizational strengthening programme (termed the OSP). The OSP does not seem to have succeeded as the CCER of March 2004 stated again that “IFPRI researchers face huge time pressures and have to perform across a number of activities”. In the same context the survey showed time spent on fund-raising varied and that:

- 16% of staff spent more than 20% of their time on fund-raising
- 13% spent from 16% to 20%
- 9% spent from 11% to 15%
- 20% spent 6 % to 10%

(75 respondents provided this information)

During the course of this review the Panel was informed that management was addressing this problem.

The Panel also noted that the time reporting system for projects does not capture time spent on the variety of activities related either directly or indirectly to research projects. As such, if past actuals for labor costs are used as a guide to estimating future project proposals, there could be gross underestimating, thus perpetuating the time famine phenomenon. Moreover, management would not have a sense of the time spent by staff on the “indirect” activities supporting research.

¹⁸ Staff Survey: 102 responded out of a possible 186

On the positive side a majority of respondents to the survey found that IFPRI provided a collegial and pleasant atmosphere to work in. The attractiveness of a multi-cultural environment and the mission of IFPRI's work were other items that appealed to staff.

Another issue raised by staff in response to the question in the survey -“where you believe IFPRI seriously needs improvement”- was in the area of communications. Several narrative responses mentioned that there was a lack of communication between the DG, Division heads and staff and that despite a stated “open door” policy by management, two-way communication was neither always possible nor encouraged. This was not a universal concern. The Panel was pleased to note that staff considered IFPRI a congenial place to work in and encourages management to build on this base.

The Panel recommends that:

- **To establish with some certainty the time spent on indirect activities (committees, fund-raising, conferences and presentations) that take time away from direct research work, and thus to provide better data for estimating time required for new projects, a system of time recording be instituted parallel to the existing one, on a trial basis, to cover an identified set of indirect activities.**
- **To address the concern about the lack of two-way communication between the DG, Division Heads and staff, a management course on this and other managerial tasks be offered to Heads, after a multi-source (360 degree) survey.**

4.3 Finance and Administration

4.3.1 Introduction

The Division, headed by a Director, is composed of the 5 service units: Finance, Human Resources, Computer Services, Facilities and Office Services, Travel Services. The Division has a total complement of 26 staff including the Director, up from 23 in 1998. The increase in staff has been due to the large increase in IFPRI's programmes (and staffing) during this period. Costs of the Computer Services unit, Facilities and Office Services, and Travel Services are, since 2002, charged directly to projects while costs of the Finance and Human Resource units are part of indirect costs along with the costs of the Director General's office and the Board of Trustees.

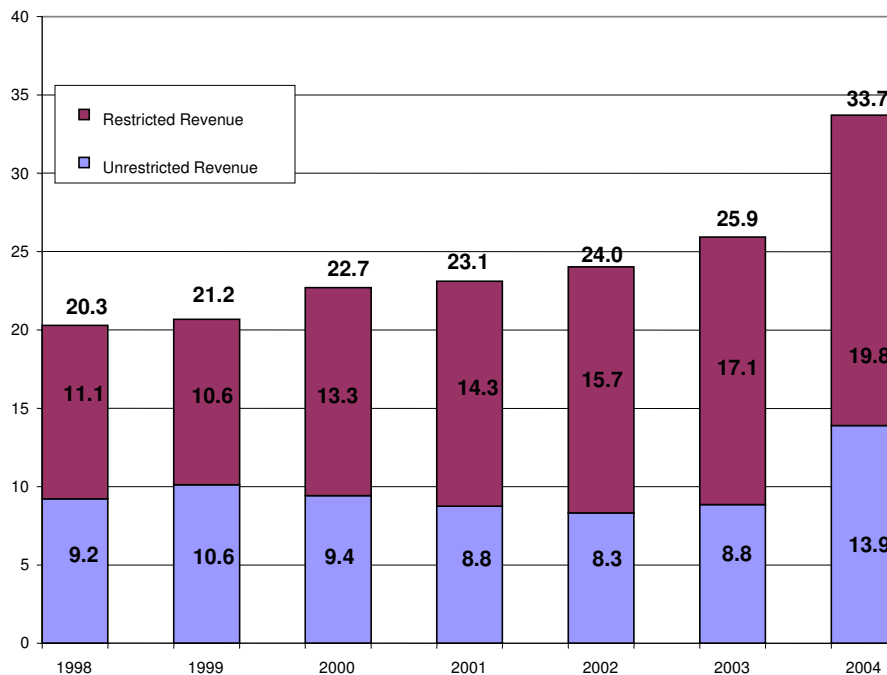
4.3.2 Finance

4.3.2.1 Financial status

In the period 1998 through 2004, total funding has grown by 66%, from \$ 20.3 m to \$ 33.7 m (estimated), maintaining a sustained growth since the last EPMP (Figure 4.2). The increase of 30% in total funding between 2003 and 2004 is largely due to the transfer

to IFPRI of \$ 5 m for the transfer of ISNAR programmes into IFPRI. The proportion of restricted¹⁹ funds within the total funds rose from 52% to 66% in the 6 years (1998 to 2003), but came down to 58% in 2004 with the receipt of unrestricted funds for the ISNAR programme. This proportion, 58%, is in line with the average in 2002 and 2003 for other institutes in the CG system.

Figure 4.2: IFPRI Funding 1998-2004 (US\$ in millions)



Notes:

1. Unrestricted funds (not subject to donor-imposed stipulations) include investment income and foreign exchange gains
2. Total revenue for 2004 Includes \$ 3.5 m unrestricted and \$ 1.5 m restricted, for ISNAR
3. Figures for 2004 are preliminary estimates

In the period 1998 to 2004 the number of donors to IFPRI for unrestricted funds decreased from some 24 to 20. However, donors who ceased unrestricted contributions switched their contributions to restricted funding. The largest donors have consistently been the World Bank and USAID. In 2002-2003 CIDA stepped up its contributions markedly to all institutes in the CG system. In 2004 the World Bank and USAID made contributions of \$2.25 m and \$1.38 m respectively, making their combined contribution 27% of unrestricted funds. At the same time restricted funds have grown as IFPRI has been able to attract funds for programmes, such as the 2020 Initiative and HarvestPlus Challenge, among others. In 2004, the largest ten donors to IFPRI programmes for unrestricted and restricted funds were:

¹⁹ Donor funds subject to donor-imposed stipulations

<u>Unrestricted (\$ m, rounded)</u>		<u>Restricted (\$ m, rounded)</u>	
World Bank	2.25	USAID	4.80
CIDA*	1.73	World Bank	1.40
USAID	1.38	Harvest Plus**	1.62
UK	1.09	EC	2.26
Netherlands	0.98	Rockefeller	0.68
Norway	1.10	Norway	0.50
Denmark	0.53	Germany	0.64
Ireland	0.75	AED/USAID	0.55
Germany	0.55	ADB	0.52
Switzerland	0.40	UK	0.42

*For donor names – where abbreviated, refer to Appendix VII

**Consortium of donors of whom the Gates Foundation is the largest

4.3.2.2 Cash management

IFPRI maintains an operating account at Sun Trust (a publicly quoted bank on the US Stock Exchange – assets \$160 bn), with sufficient cash to meet daily needs and automatically sweeps excess or deficit cash into or out of an investment account to minimize idle funds. The investment account is managed by Trustco Capital Management (a subsidiary of Sun Trust) which manages these funds in accordance with Board approved (Dec.1994) guidelines, whose objective is to preserve capital while maximizing income and maintaining a liquidity equivalent to one month's operations. The portfolio consists of low risk investments with an average triple-A rating. Of the total accumulated reserves, the Board requires that IFPRI maintains a "restricted" (to their discretion) operating reserve (working capital) equivalent to 90 days of operating expenses.

4.3.2.3 Indirect Costs

IFPRI has followed full cost recovery principles for many years. Since 1998 IFPRI has implemented service centres as an integral method for allocating costs. The service centres for library, computer and facility services allowed for previously indirect costs to be charged as direct costs to projects. The service centre costs are allocated to projects based on the direct labour costs incurred. In compliance with US regulations governing Federal grants and contracts, this approach was presented to USAID for review where it was accepted. Through this change, implemented in 2002, IFPRI has reduced the indirect cost rate to approximately 15% from nearly 30% in 1998. The methodology is consistent with US accounting standards, CGIAR's guidelines and ensures compliance with USAID accounting regulations.

The only components for calculating the indirect cost rate now are the costs of the Finance and Human Resource functions, the DGO and Board of Trustees. These costs are pooled together and divided by total direct research costs to arrive at an indirect rate which is applied to the costs of each project. For 2003 this rate was 14.64% and is estimated to be 15.3% for 2004.

4.3.2.4 External Audits

The board mandates that external auditors be rotated at least every five years. KPMG (an international auditing firm) conducted the audits from 1997 through 2002. This six year period was an exception granted by the board to ensure continuity during the transition to a new Director of Finance in late 2001. For 2003, Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) was appointed as the external auditors after a formal bidding process. In addition to the regular financial statement audit, IFPRI is required to have a separate audit (A-133) performed for funds received from the US Federal Government. The Deltek computerized financial management system used by IFPRI provides project financials in a form suitable for the separate external audit required to satisfy compliance with US Federal donor requirements.

4.3.2.5 Internal Audit

IFPRI does not have an internal auditor in its organization. It out-sources this function to a consultant as and when found necessary. The activity of an internal auditor has changed in recent times from being a “vouch and verify” activity aimed at detecting irregularities, to include a broader spectrum of activities. The CGIAR policy guidelines in 2001 identified five areas²⁰, which include performance criteria, accountability, and the desirability of ensuring that goals and objectives are established which are consistent with those of the organization. CGIAR, therefore, encouraged Centre boards to establish an internal audit function for obtaining objective assurance on the adequacy and integrity of internal controls. Other organizations go one step further and include business process improvements (aimed at improving productivity), as an activity for an internal auditor. Given the importance of this activity the CGIAR Systems Office has proposed a Consortium of institutes – of which IFPRI is one - to share internal audit and advisory services by drawing on a central pool, either to perform internal audits or augment the efforts of an institute’s internal auditor carry out the enlarged audits now seen as desirable. IFPRI plans to continue to out-source this activity but augment it by drawing on the CG Consortium.

4.3.2.6 Travel Costs

Travel costs have more than doubled in the period 1998 to 2004 although total research funding went up by only 66%, and staffing by 21% (measures of activity) in the same period. Within this overall picture, the rise in costs of some 60% between 2003 and 2004 was particularly steep. As a percentage of total expenditures in 2004 it was 9.5%. The average in the CGIAR system has been in the order of 7%.

Travel Costs (US \$ millions)

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
1.350	1.648	1.536	1.603	1.868	2.226	3.020

²⁰ Called the *COSO* components: control environment; risk assessment; control activities; inf. & communication; monitoring

The Panel was informed that the sharp rise in 2004 cost was mainly due to the Vision 2020 conference in Africa although there has also been a marked increase (some 24%) on travel for field projects. Management has put in place a computerized travel data bank to monitor closely, travel plans and institute better criteria for justifying travel needs.

4.3.2.7 Assessment

The Panel notes the following achievements in the field of finance:

- The indirect cost rate is among the lowest in the CG system (where they range from 15% to 28%)
- Consistently met financial performance indicators for financial stability
- Unqualified (clean) audit report by PWRC for 2003, and clean reports in every year since the last EPMR
- Clean reports on special (A-133) audits
- Managed successfully, the transfer of funds for ISNAR and the contract negotiations for management of the HarvestPlus funds

IFPRI has managed its income and expenditure prudently, ending each of the years since the last EPMR with a surplus, thereby putting itself in a healthy financial position with an accumulated surplus of \$11 m (estimated) at end-2004. This is due to the Board's mandated guidelines for a conservative and prudent cash management strategy (with an annual set-aside to reserves). The Panel commends IFPRI for having consistently met the financial performance indicator recommended by CGIAR for long-term stability - well above 120 days. The Panel suggests that the practice of having both current and investment accounts in one bank be re-examined from a risk-reduction point of view.

IFPRI's management of its finances is due to a competent finance team, and a well-designed internal financial control system with timely reports. However, while the overall system is computerized, there are apparently still some transactions between the Divisional Administrative Coordinators and finance that have to be entered manually. All other financial information is available in 'real time' to all budget holders and the DG, while the Board receives a quarterly report. The staff survey conducted by the Panel showed that a majority of the staff was satisfied with the function's support.

With the opening of decentralized offices, the out-posting of staff to 9 locations, and the enlarged scope of internal audits described earlier, the job content for an internal auditor has increased considerably. IFPRI's intention to augment its out-sourced internal audit activity by using the CGIAR Consortium is a move in the right direction.

The Panel commends IFPRI for the initiative taken in bringing indirect costs down and for its careful and prudent management of financial resources.

4.3.3 Human Resources (HR)

4.3.3.1 HR Services Unit

The unit reports to the Director of Finance and Administration, and is staffed by a Head, assisted by two Senior HR Generalists and two HR Assistants. The unit handles all the administrative and policy aspects of the HR function: recruitment, employment, performance appraisals, relocations, dismissal and disciplinary actions, training and staff records. Staffing of the unit was increased by two positions in 2004 on account of IFPRI's heavy recruitment programme.

4.3.3.2 Staffing Trends

Total staff numbers in IFPRI have risen from 107 in 1998 to 193 in 2004 (Table 4.2). Within these totals, the Senior Research staff²¹ component has roughly doubled (from 39 to 75), as have the Support staff component (from 56 to 105). Senior Administration staff numbers have remained nearly constant. Over the same period the proportion of female staff within total staff has risen from 46% to 58%. Within this progression there are variations. Female staff in the Senior Research category went up from 20% to 29%, in Support staff from 62% to 78%, but remained roughly constant at around 50%, in the Senior Administration staff category. Due to the increased activity on country projects, 20 senior staff now have research assignments in nine countries. These numbers include staff on ISNAR programmes which began as of 2004.

Table 4.2 IFPRI Staff Composition, 1998-2004

Staff Classification	1998			1999			2000			2001			2002			2003			2004		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Senior Research	31	8	39	41	11	52	41	14	55	39	10	49	41	12	53	42	12	54	53	22	75
Senior Administration	6	6	12	6	5	11	7	7	14	6	8	14	6	8	14	7	8	15	6	7	13
All Support Staff	21	35	56	26	54	80	20	53	73	23	62	85	26	71	97	26	68	94	23	82	105
Total	58	49		73	70		68	74		68	80		73	91		75	88		82	111	
%	54	46		51	49		48	52		46	54		45	55		46	54		42	58	

4.3.3.3 Recruitment

With the increase in funding that IFPRI has received in the period 1998 to 2004 recruitment activity had a sharp rise, particularly in 2004. Statistics show that annual recruitment between 2000 and 2003 went up from some 45 to 53 staff, but rose sharply to

²¹ Include Division Directors, Project managers, Research Unit Heads, Senior Scientists, Research Fellows and Post-Doctoral Fellows.

93 positions including a carry forward of 22 unfilled positions in 2003 (39 international and 54 local). In 2004, recruitment time for international staff took, on average, 5.5 months but for locally recruited positions it was two months.

4.3.3.4 Staff Turnover

Data for the years 2000 through 2004 show terminations at 28, 26, 20, 33 and 21 staff per year, respectively. Of these, terminations due to individuals accepting positions elsewhere were: 2001 – 8; 2002 – 4; 2003 – 12; 2004 – 9. Other terminations were due to the expiration of contracts, individuals' desires to pursue academic studies, personal reasons, and unsatisfactory performance. The total turnover percentage ranged from a high of 24% in 2003 to a low of 11% in 2004.

4.3.3.5 Policy Manuals

The policy manual is posted on IFPRI's intranet and accessible to all staff. However, it needs to be updated in order bring it in line with the latest labour regulations in the US. The task was out-sourced to specialists and the revised version is to be presented to the Board for approval in March 2005. While this will continue to be the basic manual for all IFPRI staff, a supplement to the manual has been prepared, with policies applicable to out-posted staff in recognition of IFPRI's decentralization strategy. It was introduced in February 2004.

4.3.3.6 Performance Appraisals

IFPRI follows a process with a timetable for conducting annual appraisals. Detailed guidelines, differentiated for four staff categories – Senior Research staff, Senior staff reporting to the DG, Senior Administrative staff, and Support staff - are distributed at the start of the process. Briefly, the process starts with a self-appraisal against identified markers including previously agreed goals/targets for the year. These self-appraisals then become the basis for a discussion with the appropriate supervisor which led to a rating of staff performance in one of five categories: Exceptional; Exceeds IFPRI standards; Meets IFPRI standards; Below standards; Unsatisfactory. Clear benchmarks have been specified as to the characteristics that would qualify for these ratings.

4.3.3.7 Compensation

IFPRI's compensation policy reflects its goal of keeping pace with the different job markets from which staff is recruited. Compensation covers salary, benefits, allowances and perquisites. IFPRI strives to maintain a benefit plan that is competitive for an international non-profit organization in Washington, D.C. The last major review was undertaken by consultants in the period September 2001 to January 2002. The review found that 52% of positions were above the mid-point²² (of the market compensation for the salary range) when benefits were included, and 5% below the market range. Adjustments were made by IFPRI to correct anomalies. IFPRI also takes part in periodic surveys conducted by the World Bank, and collects data from multiple sources annually in order to estimate a percentage for the annual pay rises in line with trends in comparable organizations.

²² Term used by compensation consultants to differentiate the minimum, mid-point and the maximum in an applicable salary range.

4.3.3.8 Achievements

- Managed the recruitment of a large number of staff
- Integrated ISNAR staff into IFPRI's HR systems
- Administered the posting of staff to new locations
- Systemized and streamlined the performance appraisal process
- Prepared a three-year plan (2005 – 2007) for Gender and Diversity which addressed policies, practices and staffing

4.3.3.9 Assessment

The HR Unit has had three heads between 2001 and 2004 and a turnover in assisting staff as well. This lack of continuity has resulted in a loss of institutional memory which has had to be restored at a time when recruitment activity surged. This has put a heavy load on the unit. Non-routine activities undertaken in the past two years included streamlining administrative processes (computerizing), overseeing the revision of the policy manual, preparing the supplement to the manual for out-posted staff, incorporating gender and diversity goals into DD work plans, and preparing gender-friendly recruitment material. The transfer of ISNAR staff into IFPRI and the opening of new offices in India, Ethiopia and Costa Rica have further added to the load. Since mid-2003 the unit has been headed by a professional with a background of some 20 years in the HR profession. The Head and staff of this unit are striving hard to cope with this unusual, but temporary, load. The Panel conducted a confidential survey of IFPRI staff on a web-based platform, aimed at finding the staff's degree of satisfaction with IFPRI as a place to work in. 110 staff (out of a possible 190) responded. Questions relating specifically to research work were limited to research staff. With respect to HR services, several narrative responses voiced concern that HR staff did not seem to have the time to listen to individual concerns nor seemed to be able to play an advocacy role with management when needed. The Panel believes that this could be reflection of the load on the unit and suggests that management addresses this concern. If in-house resources are insufficient to clear the non-routine tasks within a reasonable time-frame, other means – temporary hires, interns – should be considered. The Panel believes that this should free up time in the unit for it to be more supportive of staff. The Panel is, however, of the opinion that staff must view their line managers as their first point of contact for staff concerns, and the HR unit more as a backstop - interpreters of IFPRI staff policy and for addressing grievances.

On the performance evaluation question, responses from staff had a wide spread - dissatisfied and very dissatisfied 33%, satisfied and very satisfied 32%, with 23% neutral and 12% responding as 'not applicable'. The response is not untypical of other institutes and may reflect differences in ratings between Divisions. The Panel, therefore, suggests that before the next round of appraisals, staff is given an opportunity to pin-point reasons for dissatisfaction and if justified, undertake modifications. The current performance appraisal guidelines appear to be comprehensive.

The Panel noted that although females on staff are now 58% (up from 46% in 1998), there are, since January 2005 only two female staff in the Senior Research

management category (25% of total). This was brought to the attention of the Panel by some members of the Board as well. The Panel, therefore, commends the initiatives taken on the Gender and Diversity (G & D) topic, especially those related to tracking G & D applicants and identifying the advertising sources that produce best results.

4.3.4 Service Centres and Travel Services

Computer Services, Facilities/Office Services, and the Travel Coordinator are part of the Finance and Administration Division reporting to its Director

4.3.4.1 Computer Services (CS)

The CS unit is responsible for the design, purchase, implementation maintenance and support of all information technology (IT) used at IFPRI. On the hardware side this includes: desk top and portable computers and area networks (LAN/WAN²³), telephony, and connectivity. On the software side CS is responsible for the design, implementation, maintenance and support of IFPRI's Intranet and the dissemination of datasets. The unit has a total complement of five IT professional staff including the head of the unit. Tasks such as web-hosting, e-mail services and voice services are outsourced to CG net services for an annual fee. CS prepares an annual work plan, to keep IFPRI's services at the practical edge ("fit-for-purpose") vis-à-vis IFPRI users. The practice is to solicit input from users on proposed improvements or upgrades before formulating action. The Computer Advisory committee, composed of representatives from each Division, is a channel to obtain consensus on CS initiatives. Costs incurred by this unit are now passed through as a service centre charge and directly allocated to the costs of projects (see indirect costs, chapter 4.3, Finance). CS conduct periodic targeted user surveys but a less frequent (3 to 5 years) IFPRI-wide survey. The most recent of these wide surveys was done in September 2003. Ratings received on this survey were predominantly 'good' to 'excellent' for both, support services and facilities.

4.3.4.2 Achievements

- Maintaining a stable computer network in 2003 and 2004
- Receiving good to excellent ratings from users
- Commissioning the new Intranet with simplified access and speedy display
- Introducing several productivity enhancing computer programmes (e.g., travel planner, linking the project/donor system to the Intranet)

4.3.4.3 Assessment

The Panel was pleased to find that staff rated CS support highly. This was broadly confirmed in the survey conducted by the Panel. Panel members themselves were well-served by the system and technical support received during the period of this review. The Panel commends the services rendered by CS.

²³ LAN = Local Area Network; WAN = Wide Area Network

4.3.4.4 Facilities/Office Services

This unit meets IFPRI's administrative needs in the area of office space, conference/meeting facilities, audio-visual equipment, furniture, and equipment for reproduction and faxing services. In the period between 1998 and 2004 one of this unit's major tasks, undertaken in 1998, was to transfer IFPRI's offices from its previous location to its present site. IFPRI now occupies 47,000 square feet of office space spread over four floors in a modern office complex, and 2100 sq. ft. storage space. The unit is also responsible for all procurement (except computers, software packages and telephones - done by CS) and service contracts. It has a complement of five staff including the head of the unit. The unit maintains good computerized records on the allocation of office space (which meet OSHA²⁴ standards), visitor occupancies, conference facility usage and copy- printing usage. Through these records the unit keeps track of users, usage and costs, and is able to anticipate forward needs. All cleaning and janitorial services are part of the lease of space but security service is contracted out separately. Services for conferences and equipment can be booked on-line by any member of staff and conference attendees are encouraged to feed back their comments on the facilities as a means of ensuring user satisfaction. The totality of its services (including the annual leasing costs) is passed through as a service centre cost, in the same manner as for CS costs (previous section).

4.3.4.5 Achievements

- Successfully negotiating extra space in the same building in 2004
- Accommodating the extra numbers of staff in the premises
- Implementing videoconferencing
- Assisting in the set up of new offsite offices

4.3.4.6 Assessment

The Panel was impressed by the premises, services and its upkeep. It commends IFPRI on its selection of the site, the efficiency with which it is maintained and the effective security system in place. These aspects reflect well on this service unit's competence and diligence.

4.3.4.7 Travel Coordinator

This is a coordinating and facilitating activity handled by one staff member. Starting in 1998 IFPRI modified its policy to allow staff greater choice in their travel plans. This unit assists staff to find the most cost-effective travel option, if need be, even with staff purchasing their tickets themselves. This unit now works through a "wholesale consolidator" and two corporate travel agencies. Through an internal website displaying IFPRI travel policy along with information on visas, hotels, and external travel websites, sufficient information is available to staff to make an informed choice comparing self-made plans against purchasing through the coordinator. This unit also manages an on-line travel planner which has made the travel approval process transparent. Staff have been encouraged to use the purchase route (self-made or through the coordinator) that will provide IFPRI with efficient service and the best price. In 2003 a travel database was

²⁴ OSHA – Occupational Safety and Health Administration

created as a tool for collecting all travel related issues. This database also allows staff to view on the intranet the list of current travel plans of staff which will assist in avoiding duplication of travel.

4.3.4.8 Achievements

The creation of databases and on-line systems, and establishing relationships with travel agencies for finding cost-competitive travel fares

4.3.4.9 Assessment

IFPRI's use of a coordinator as a facilitator, to find the most cost-effective travel plan for staff, is to be commended. The coordinator is well-informed and up-to-date on the travel and airline ticketing scene.

CHAPTER 5 - ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE, AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Optimizing the Research Agenda

Chapter 2 addressed the broad picture of IFPRI's strategy and its mode of implementation. In this chapter, the Panel assesses key aspects of how implementation actually works, in keeping IFPRI's agenda in line with its ongoing mission as well as changing demands for IFPRI services and changing alternative suppliers of those services.

Responding to demand: In general, IFPRI has moved with impressive agility, for an organization of its size and embeddedness within the even larger CGIAR structure, to align its work with changing demands. This is most evident in the continuing willingness of donors to fund IFPRI projects, attesting to both the perceived quality of work and IFPRI's capability to deliver products and services. It also exhibits the willingness of IFPRI management to adjust its research activities to what the market is looking for.

This adaptability and willingness to take on more tasks has its costs. It places strains upon IFPRI's ability to focus upon its stated priorities and to stay within its areas of comparative advantage. This strain appears so far not to have been a serious problem in that the new demands fit well within IFPRI's expertise and broad priorities, although the Panel does see a problem in managing the growth in projects.

Competing suppliers: The strong position of IFPRI in the market for food and agricultural policy research in the international development context is abetted by the decline or stagnation of competing organizations. U.S. Land Grant Universities have largely withdrawn from applied agricultural science and policy efforts in developing countries. Similar reductions of commitment have occurred in the UK. The formerly important Stanford Food Research Institute and Harvard Institute for International Development have expired. Profit-seeking development institutions and non-profit NGOs are growing but have little capacity for long-term research as opposed to short-term consultancies or non-professional policy advocacy. The World Bank and FAO have strong capabilities in some areas of IFPRI activity, notably country studies, rural/urban interfaces, and statistical and analytical work on world agriculture and trade. However, they do not have some of the readily mobilized resources that IFPRI possesses. The Bank, for example, draws on IFPRI for, among other services, specific country research expertise.

Thus IFPRI's longstanding comparative advantage as a food policy research institution is not only retained but is also increasing. There are nonetheless areas where IFPRI's relative strengths are approaching their limit. IFPRI's strategy document identifies its desired niche as research producing global public goods (as opposed to findings and information relevant to a single country). However, the most global of

public goods in this area are general results -- theoretical findings, approaches to modelling, econometric and data-collecting innovations -- and in these areas universities and national research institutions may have the comparative advantage. It may turn out that IFPRI's longer-term strengths lie not in being a producer of these highly generalized global public goods but rather as a facilitator of their supply and distribution (an activity which in itself could be treated as an IPG). IFPRI would, therefore, become the delivery mechanism while production itself would be outsourced to university faculty and independent investigators.

Where IFPRI appears to have a comparative advantage in research production is in applied economics, including simulation models that synthesize current knowledge, and empirical research involving survey work in developing countries, analysis of survey and secondary data to quantify key allegations of fact and to test behavioural hypotheses, and to integrate findings from IFPRI's own and other research to provide objective analyses of policy options. IFPRI has been notably carrying out these tasks for policies that really matter in developing countries. An example is the joint IFPRI-ILRI work on the strength of land ownership rights and soil conservation in Ethiopia. Survey-based data generated credible findings (refereed articles in selective journals) on a subject that is one of the hottest issues in Ethiopian politics.

The heart of IFPRI's research activity is the project work its staff accomplishes every day, and that work is the product of individuals. The content of the work is the substance of a research project. The role of priority setting is to ensure that projects contribute as much as possible to the mission of IFPRI. IFPRI's strategy document encourages the reader to see priority setting as top-down: mission interpreted through prioritization criteria to generate a set of research themes, which are brought to realization through projects that cover the ground of the themes. Actually, it appears that research management at IFPRI is bottom-up. Members of the research staff, either as individuals or groups, have ideas for research which they flesh out and advance through IFPRI's well defined project approval process. The role of the overall IFPRI strategy here would be to accept or reject research proposals based on the criteria or themes.

Where the top-down strategy is more relevant is in longer-term IFPRI decisions about the disciplinary mix of the staff, and the mix of specializations within disciplines. Yet the disciplinary sources of scientific expertise are left unstated in the strategy. Indeed IFPRI is not explicitly identified as a social science institution in the mission or strategy documents. It is implicit, however, in as much that the DG, Division Directors, and the great majority of the professional staff are social scientists, largely economists--the remainder being nutritional scientists. Within the disciplinary purview of economics, it is quite unclear how the subject matter is to be approached. This may be taken as a matter of tactics, to be changed as needed and not pre-specified. However, issues such as role of political scientists (for example), the use of various specialties within economics, and the approach to research within each specialty (e.g., development of methods vs. application of existing methods) require longer-term decisions, notably the make-up of the professional staff and kind of research projects that get top priority.

The Challenge: How can IFPRI's priority setting work best to keep the research agenda as productive as possible? The importance of the set of strategic issues which IFPRI has not explicitly addressed is underlined by the fact that in our peer and donor interviews, the issues of greatest interest and disagreement among those surveyed have to do with these matters; whereas the ground covered by the vision, mission, and strategy (including the 14 themes), is much less contentious. Indeed, virtually none of the peers or donors expressed disagreement with or endorsement of vision, mission, or themes, or even knowledge of them. Rather, the kudos and criticisms involved approaches taken – extent of theory versus application, focus on survey research versus applied policy work – and relative weight placed on research in different topical areas (for example, to what extent should IFPRI weigh in to support developing country positions in WTO debates). The Panel noted important issues of resource allocation between directly agriculture-related and broader rural issues such as farm-nonfarm linkages, and a food focus versus broader poverty alleviation concerns. The preceding areas are ones where the decisions that IFPRI makes matter. It is striking that IFPRI, despite a lot of effort and words on its website about the vision, mission, and themes, states virtually nothing about its priorities on many of the things that really matter to interested observers.

The Panel recommends that IFPRI should add to its strategy an approach to optimizing the mix of disciplinary competencies and research approaches as well as research areas.

5.2 Quality of Research Inputs and Processes

The essential input for high-quality research is highly qualified and motivated researchers. IFPRI draws post-doctoral researchers with excellent credentials. The Institute can be selective because it is an attractive place for new PhDs to gain research experience, especially those who are strongly drawn to work on economic development and poverty alleviation as many young scholars are. IFPRI's more senior staff also have earned a reputation as dedicated and competent researchers. In the Panel's view, an increase in human capital at the most senior level would be opportune, particularly if the Institute can attract individuals who are internationally recognized as being among the top handful of experts. Such individuals are not absent from IFPRI, but a few more would be welcome. They would not necessarily be full-time permanent IFPRI employees.

Support staff also provide indispensable inputs for the efficient generation of high quality research. In the Panel's view, IFPRI is well served in this regard. The Panel's staff survey revealed no significant dissatisfaction with research support services, and this is an area where deficiencies are keenly felt by researchers and are unlikely to go unexpressed. Similarly, facilities support in information and computational technology appears to be adequate.

Having appropriate processes of review of projects and outputs in place also enhances research quality. The detailed review procedures for project initiation that have

been established within each Division are well designed to keep research focused as much as possible on the mission, and to make sense within the whole portfolio of IFPRI projects. Although this may be too coarse a filter-- letting too broad a range of projects through, the opposite, i.e., a too narrow topical focus could be worse in excluding ideas that depart from IFPRI's mainstream, thereby derailing projects that, while risky, may generate exceedingly high returns. On the output side, the Panel endorses the establishment of the new Publications Review Committee (PRC). The PRC constitutes a mechanism to encourage IFPRI researchers to take the extra, often time-consuming and difficult steps necessary to strengthen the reception of a project's findings by getting them published in a well-regarded professional journal. Such publishing fosters wider readership and bolsters IFPRI's reputation as a premier research institution more than publishing in a less selective journal would do.

The painstaking internal programme reviews that each Division goes through each year is an excellent means of self-assessment to help keep projects on track or at least make them accountable if not. It also provides staff and management the opportunity to reevaluate and revise research programmes on a regular basis. Centre commissioned external reviews are a further step in the quality management process that IFPRI has not, in the view of the Panel, sufficiently utilized. The CCER of March 2004 was helpful, but to provide full benefit an outside team should focus on one Division at a time.

The Panel recommends instituting rolling Centre Commissioned External Reviews of each Division, with the objective of each Division undergoing review every five years.

IFPRI has undertaken a number of other quality-enhancing activities that the Panel commends. Its seminar series with distinguished outside speakers is an excellent way to bring in new ideas and to foster discussion of research issues beyond current project work. The brown-bag lunches have similar virtues. The "tools and methods" group is a venture that should yield returns in importing cutting-edge research techniques to IFPRI in a more systematic way, as is the presence of visiting scholars who stay for a few weeks or months. Indeed, the Panel believes IFPRI should explore the possibility of an expanded visiting scholar programme. In the staff survey, several commented that a prime attraction of IFPRI as a place to work was its vibrant intellectual atmosphere, with serious discussion of important issues being a common occurrence (although one respondent reported intentions to leave IFPRI because of the absence of such an atmosphere). No doubt the atmosphere depends to some extent on where in IFPRI one is.

The Challenge: A potentially serious problem for IFPRI is constraints on its capabilities to supply the services its donors are willing to pay for. The risk is a decline in the quality of research processes as given resources are strained to generate additional output. Increasing time pressure was the most commonly expressed source of dissatisfaction in the Panel's staff survey. There is no more important immediate task for management than finding ways to remedy this problem.

5.3 Quality of Research Output

Research quality is a subjective matter, which in the sciences resolves in the end to the respect the research generates among disciplinary peers. The clearest objective indicator of this respect is articles that pass muster in peer review and appear in highly regarded journals. The recent record of IFPRI in publishing in peer-reviewed journals is shown in Table 5.1. The average for the 7 years, 1998-2004, is 81 per year, as compared to 36 per year during for the preceding 4 years. The number of senior research staff averaged 58 during the latter period and 51 during the former, so annual publication of refereed articles per senior staff researcher increased from 0.7 in 1994-97 to 1.4 in 1998-2004, an impressive rate of progress. However, in the Panel's view there is still ample room for further improvement.

There are numerous difficulties in interpreting the publication data – handling of non-IFPRI joint authors, or IFPRI visitor authors, counting of notes versus articles, counting of invited versus regularly submitted articles, standing of the journal, and linking the time of publication with the time of the research published. These preclude giving a strong meaning to the absolute numbers, but the trend still is likely to indicate something about the production of reasonably high-quality research findings.

The only refinement the Panel undertook was to focus on a set of economic journals that are particularly well recognized as purveyors of high-quality output. Consulting an independent worldwide ranking of economics journals (from Leicester, UK), the type of outlet high-quality IFPRI research might be found in appears to encompass the top 100 journals. These include the well-known general economics journals plus the most highly cited specialized journals.²⁵ IFPRI authors during 1998-2004 published 131 articles in such journals, an average of 0.35 per year per senior research staff member. Restricting attention to only the top 20 journals, IFPRI authors had only six articles in total over the 7 years.

Beyond research quality as measured by refereed journal articles, IFPRI's quality of publications has to be measured by their relevance and influence. Assessment of achievements in this area involves a different, perhaps even more intractable, set of difficulties. Citations have been used as an indicator. This indicator has the limitation that it measures use by other professional authors, not by policy practitioners; but the indicator has the value that research reports and working papers, when cited, count equally with journal articles, so research output, if used, gets credit no matter the type of outlet. A study of citations of IFPRI authors (covering only journal articles however)

²⁵ Two journals that did not appear on the top-100 list were also included because of the Panel's view that they are as influential as some on the list: *Agricultural Economics* and *Science*. Note that the list also excludes journals of nutrition and other health-related and social science disciplines in which a number of IFPRI articles have appeared. The Panel's assessment of nutrition-related publishing is in Chapter 3.

indicates that IFPRI's work is cited as much as or more than that of comparable research institutions.²⁶

Table 5.1 IFPRI Publications in Peer-reviewed Journals, by Division, 1992-2004.

Productivity Index for IFPRI Journal Articles 1992-2004													
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Journal Articles (Peer Reviewed) Total*													
	30	18	38	30	28	47	64	72	91	90	75	91	82**
DSGD												13	13
EPTD	6	5	10	8	9	18	15	14	24	38	19	39	34
FCND	20	10	25	10	11	20	23	32	32	27	32	26	23
MTID/MSSD	1	0	0	2	1	0	4	9	6	9	9	7	10
TMD	3		1	2	2	5	10	8	16	15	12	11	
CD/Outreach		2	1	6	4	4	3	2	5	2	6	0	2
DGO		1	1	1	1	1	7	5	9	3	6	2	4
* Division co-publish - which leads to some double counting													
**Preliminary, not yet complete													
Productivity Per Senior Researcher													
Total			0.83	0.61	0.54	0.84	1.36	1.26	1.57	1.73	1.32	1.38	1.19**
DSGD												1.18	0.87
EPTD	na	na	0.67	0.44	0.5	1.2	1	0.93	1.41	2.24	1.06	3.25	2.27
FCND	1.25	0.71	2.27	1	0.69	0.95	1.28	1.33	1.52	1.5	1.52	1.44	1.28
MTID/MSSD	0.09	0	0	0.22	0.14	0	0.57	1.13	0.86	1.5	1.29	0.78	1.11
TMD	na	na	0.25	0.5	0.5	1.25	3.33	2	2.29	3	2.4	1.22	n/a
CD/Outreach													
DGO													

Assessments of quality are inevitably subjective, and the opinion of the world about IFPRI's research is in some sense contained in the impressions of people who deal with IFPRI or read IFPRI publications. An assessment of this kind is what the Panel hoped to obtain through interviews with peers, donors, and clients. With respect to the professional quality of research output, the source the Panel relied most upon was the views of peers. Among the roughly 40 peers and donors the Panel interviewed for purposes of this EPMR, the quality of IFPRI's research output is the number one element they chose to comment on. Two comments were by far most prevalent. The first was that IFPRI is the pre-eminent institution in the economics of global agricultural and rural development, some say by far. The second is that the quality of IFPRI research output (meaning here written reports in all forms) is notably heterogeneous. The complaint is not of heterogeneity in subject matter, analytical methods, or style; but rather a qualitative

²⁶ P. Pardey and J. Christian. "The Production and Diffusion of Policy Knowledge," Impact Assessment Paper No. 14, IFPRI, Jan. 2002.

one: that there is too much in too many IFPRI reports of various kinds that is unilluminating.

Overall, the high reputation of IFPRI as the world's premier source of applied research relevant to the whole range of food policy issues is widespread and longstanding. It appears to be heavily based, as is likely the case for any highly regarded institution, on admiration for a relatively few products that are seen as truly outstanding, influential, or definitive. In this connection, the Panel found survey-based work in consumption and nutrition frequently mentioned, with many other particular projects receiving praise. Donors and other stakeholders overwhelmingly appreciated various products of the 2020 Vision programme, but peers were mixed in their view of that output. The negative views ran along the lines that other institutions could do that work as well as IFPRI, and that long-term projections were inherently suspect as scientific products. It is notable, in referring to negative perceptions, how scarce they are with respect to IFPRI. The worst things peers had to say about IFPRI involved lack of presence at the research frontiers or too little focus on a particular area (e.g., trade policy). No one called attention to IFPRI output that they thought was wrong, misleading or harmful (as some of the peers are typically wont to do).

The Challenge: How to maintain IFPRI's high reputation among donors and peers for its best products, while reducing the heterogeneity of perceived quality? The quality control procedures in place are appropriate but continuing diligence will be required in applying them. Periodic external assessment of IFPRI's research should be undertaken.

A related challenge is maintaining IFPRI's reputation as the source of research of the highest quality from world-leading experts. The Panel believes it would be wise for IFPRI, in seeking to assure longer-term pre-eminence, to take steps that will result in more publication in highly ranked journals. A requirement for such publication is not only highly competent research, but above all good ideas and innovation. These are at risk in an environment dominated by keeping up with external demands and funding requirements. The rapid growth of IFPRI in recent years intensifies this challenge.

5.4 Relevance and Impact

5.4.1 Relevance

With respect to generating research output that bears importantly on food policy issues in the developing world and globally, the relevance of IFPRI's research is not in doubt. The focus on research that provides factual and analytical information to which policymakers should pay attention continues to be a high point of IFPRI's research programme.

Moreover, IFPRI has made and is making choices that focus its work on topics on which clients thirst for knowledge. In this most important sense, IFPRI scores high on relevance. It may be asked whether, even if IFPRI guarantees relevance to clients and

donors by going where it is being pulled, what about the more difficult-to-achieve relevance of pushing results on clients perhaps reluctant to take the medicine? One peer who was extravagant in his praise of IFPRI nonetheless identified as a weakness IFPRI being “too cautious when making recommendations and too fearful of being criticized by governments.” This respondent was not critical on this score, adding “but that goes with the CGIAR territory.” However, the Panel believes that IFPRI is secure enough in its credentials to be willing to risk irritating clients, perhaps not to the World Bank standard, but with fair firmness if it has a view it wants to push. This is already on the radar screen in confronting pressures for international trade protection and will be a big issue as the DSGD starts producing output. One of our respondents commented, with respect to that Division, “the rural populations of 60 to 100 countries remain mired in poverty because of bad government”. That statement was meant to encourage the DSGD agenda; it also suggests some sensitivity to DSGD output in 60 to 100 countries.

From interviews with peers and clients, and from its own experience, the Panel got the impression that IFPRI is well respected in those countries where it is known. In some countries IFPRI is perhaps not as well and widely known as one might expect – this report from a respondent in India. Most importantly, however, as one knowledgeable peer put it, “IFPRI is welcome in any country”. This is valuable good-will capital and reflects the perceived relevance of IFPRI.

Although much of IFPRI’s research is global in nature, in terms of specific geographic focus, IFPRI presently invests about 50% of its regionally-focused programmatic resources in Sub-Saharan Africa, and about 32% in South Asia. Both represent an increase over 1998 shares (46% and 26% respectfully), and hence is consistent with the CGIAR’s increasing priority to those regions where food insecurity and undernutrition are broadest and deepest. The Panel concurs with the strong emphasis on Sub-Saharan Africa.

5.4.2 Impact

Impact is another matter. IFPRI itself has given sustained and thoughtful attention to “impact assessment”, which the Panel commends. They have concluded, rightly in the Panel’s view, that there is no way of generating a quantitatively meaningful indicator of impact of IFPRI’s (or other social science) research in practice. So one necessarily falls back on citations, downloads, sales and distribution of publications, attendance at conferences, briefings of key policy officials, and so forth. Unfortunately, when all is said and done, one cannot count these measures as impact. As is the case of research quality, it is the testimony of those who have dealt with IFPRI that constitutes the most credible information. The Panel’s assessment is that IFPRI is having substantial influence, if not impact, and that the influence is beneficial. Also, more clearly than is the case with perceived quality of research output, IFPRI’s influence is seen to be increasing, at least in the post-1990 period as compared to earlier years, and to some extent in the last six years as IFPRI’s engagement with developing countries has become better organized and sustained.

Challenges: Impact is notoriously difficult to measure. There are no pathways to carrying out impact assessment that will be convincing to everyone. The Panel can only commend IFPRI's serious and sustained efforts to move forward on the impact assessment agenda.

5.5 IFPRI's Collaborations with the CGIAR, Capacity Strengthening, and Decentralization

Activities: From its beginnings, an important purpose of IFPRI has been to serve as a source of social science expertise for other CGIAR Centres, as partners with social scientists at those centres and as a systemwide resource for some integrative and evaluative tasks, notably the measurement and dissemination of information about the CG system's economic contributions. More recently, IFPRI has been a leader in Systemwide Programmes and Initiatives (CAPRI and GOAFU) and CPs (Harvest Plus, Water & Food) and a key participant in others. In these enterprises IFPRI has been asked to provide project management services as well as social science expertise. A listing of IFPRI activities with other Centres during the review period (1998-2004) is found in Appendix VI.

IFPRI's successive Medium-Term Plans have emphasized the need for greater regional decentralization. Indeed, the IFPRI strategy document recognizes the benefits of regional decentralization for its work and plans to have a larger proportion of IFPRI staff in Africa and Asia in particular. IFPRI's commitment to decentralization is evident from the recent increase in numbers of outposted staff since 1998, from 11 to 20 currently (Table 5.2) In addition, IFPRI is increasingly engaged with regional policy and research networks in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, the main focal regions of its work.

Table 5.2 IFPRI Outposted Staff, by Division, 1998 – 2004.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<u>Division</u>							
FCND	7	7	4	1	2	2	1
MTID	2	1	1	-	-	-	1
EPTD	1	1	3	3	1	-	1
DGO	1	1	1	1	-	-	-
DGSD	-	-	-	-	-	3	8
ISNAR	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
Total*	11	10	9	5	3	5	20
	(7)*	(6)	(6)	(4)	(3)	(5)	(9)

* # of different countries with outposted staff

Assessment: The scope and quantity of IFPRI's involvement with other Centres and leadership of important multi-centre programmes is impressive. In order to assess the qualitative dimension of interactions between IFPRI and other Centres, the Panel solicited the Centres' views on IFPRI and its work with their Centres. The Panel obtained such information from DG's, lead social scientists, or other professional staff, in eight Centres (CIMMYT, CIP, ICRAF, ICRISAT, ILRI, IPGRI, IRRI and WorldFish). The information was obtained through interviews (in person and by telephone) and email correspondence. Several Centres provided much detail on formal and informal collaborations. A notable feature is that many of the collaborations that were recounted most fully and enthusiastically were not products of the projects listed in Appendix VI, but rather individually arranged, relatively short-term joint efforts. It is also notable that several Centres pointed to the follow-up of activities begun under the 2020 Vision programme. This is not listed as a current collaborative project but is a valuable mechanism for interaction with IFPRI which has had continuing productive outcomes. The other unlisted programme interaction that gets repeated high marks is IFPRI's efforts in impact assessment.

Centre assessments were overwhelmingly positive. Their main wish for the future was for even more collaboration. Concern was raised that some research programmes which they had found most useful, e.g., commodity market analysis and trade and domestic policy analysis for countries in which the Centres operate, might be reduced in IFPRI's portfolio. There were, however, a couple of negative notes sounded: in the words of one respondent, IFPRI was too much "going their own way", and "running with the ball without paying attention to the other players". The only specific sore point for such views was expressed with respect to the Global Open Agriculture and Food University (GOAFU), where expectations of collaboration with IFPRI in planning have apparently not been fulfilled and doubts about the concept not resolved.

The GOAFU as well as other activities that have now been concentrated in the ISNAR division are examples of IFPRI's efforts in capacity strengthening. As one of the three main elements of IFPRI's strategy, capacity strengthening has received much less attention in this review than the research programme. In no way is this meant to diminish the importance of capacity building. The Panel believes that many of the most important and durable results in capacity strengthening come not from explicit programmes of training or advice, but rather from informal relationships between IFPRI staff and institutions they work with in developing countries. The Panel has observed that the results of such interaction are often inextricable from interactions between IFPRI researchers and other CGIAR centres, because it is these centres located in developing countries that frequently provide the entry points into developing country institutions, e.g., NARS, higher education.

Where IFPRI is likely to make further contributions in this area in the future is through its regional centres. These centres are keystones to enhancement of capacity strengthening as well as means to improve the relevance of research and acceptance of research findings. While the data in Table 5.2 do show a marked increase in number of IFPRI staff at regional centres, or variously outposted, the vast majority of this increase is

attributable to the new ISNAR programme and to DSGD, also a relatively new programme. Indeed, the presence in the field of the other Divisional staff has declined significantly. The number of outposted FCND, MTID (MSSD/MTD), EPTD and the DGO staff are down to only three, compared to 11 in 1998.

Challenges: Collaborations and decentralization of research are hard to manage while simultaneously focusing on cutting-edge research. IFPRI will have to continue to make some of its most difficult top-level decisions in the area of resource allocation between headquarters and regional centre research. The Panel commends the steps that have been taken and the care with which they have been managed so far.

5.6 Challenges in Organization and Management

A major challenge for IFPRI is how to manage its growth. Backlogs in hiring have contributed substantially to the “time-famine” discussed in Chapter 4.

More fundamental, because they will persist even when the growth spurt is accommodated, are personnel and programme management issues that define what kind of organization IFPRI is and will become. The personnel issue that places the most severe constraints on programme choices is the difficulty of hiring senior researchers with the highest qualifications. Attempts have recently failed to hire eminent applied economists from outside as Division Directors. Reasons cited by peers who claimed some knowledge about the situation centre on fund-raising responsibilities and lack of job security. Fund raising responsibilities are less and job security (post-tenure) greater in academic institutions that are the chief rival employers of these professionals. The CCER recommended introduction of some form of job security, and insulation from fund-raising responsibilities for senior scholars. The Panel sees merit in exploring renewable five-year contracts for senior scholars whose research skills are especially prized and who would not carry fund-raising responsibilities. An alternative is to rely more on senior scholars who remain in academic positions but spend some time at IFPRI, perhaps on a long-time basis. The Panel believes serious consideration should be given to establishing arrangements for both short-term visiting scholars and longer-term co-employment.

The Panel recommends that IFPRI should seriously consider an expanded visiting scholar programme and other means to infuse IFPRI with cutting-edge ideas and proposals.

Hiring issues involve not only the level of seniority but also which disciplines to hire in. The key question is whether economies of scope across disciplines exist. In carrying out the research agenda of the DSGD, clearly political science has a role. Suppose the agenda calls for 10 political scientists (some of whom may be the type who have PhDs in political science, but are actually economists in disguise), but the agenda also has a role for 10 economists. Economies of scope exist if the 20 working together in the same institution are more productive than they would be if 10 were working in two separate institutions. It is easy to say the answer is yes but actually it is not clear. It is even less clear that one gets economies of scope when the numbers are unbalanced. The

issue is whether the gains from information interchange in close proximity outweigh the losses from costs resulting from having to make collective decisions in a disparate group. These costs can result in one sub-group or the other, or both, becoming unproductive. Also, economies of scope are inevitably mixed up with economies of scale in practice. This raises the question as to whether 20 economists working together are more than twice as productive as two groups of 10.

Similar organizational challenges arise with respect to decentralization. Do the gains from spreading people out exceed the losses? In this area, the case for diversifying is more likely to outweigh the costs of giving up economies of scale, because (1) IFPRI is already so large that it is hard to see economies of scale being large at the margin, and (2) IFPRI's unique situation of having headquarters in Washington, D.C., while its areas of research interest are elsewhere. One could argue that the real purpose of decentralization is to get as much as possible of IFPRI into a developing country without damaging the political equilibrium that put IFPRI in Washington in the first place.

5.7 Conclusions

The Panel has raised a number of issues, given its evaluation, and in a number of instances made suggestions and recommendations for improvement. However, it is important to emphasize that the Panel's overall assessment of IFPRI's performance over the past seven years is overwhelmingly positive. The Panel concludes that IFPRI:

- has generated output and services of high relevance to developing countries;
- has moved with impressive agility to align its organization and activities with changing demands;
- has achieved remarkably fast growth and financial strength;
- has substantially increased its publication in refereed journals;
- has successfully integrated research, capacity strengthening, and outreach;
- has shown exemplary leadership in Challenge Programmes, and other work with CGIAR centres;
- is well positioned to take up future challenges;
- has a high reputation among peers and partners;
- has smoothly managed the absorption of ISNAR.

These achievements point to highly effective management of both programmatic and administrative components of IFPRI, for which the management team is to be congratulated. Overall, the Panel is most impressed with IFPRI's performance during the period under review.

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The arrangements made for Panel member visits to Uganda, Ethiopia and China were excellent. The Panel welcomed the briefings and support received from IFPRI staff during these country and field visits. Special thanks to Rajul Pandya-Lorch for assistance in Uganda at the 2020 Conference on Food Security in Africa, to Wilberforce Kisamba-Mugerwa who hosted the Panel's visit to Addis Ababa, and to Shenggen Fan who hosted Panel members' visit in China. The Panel benefited greatly from the frank and stimulating discussions and the wonderful hospitality during those field visits.

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